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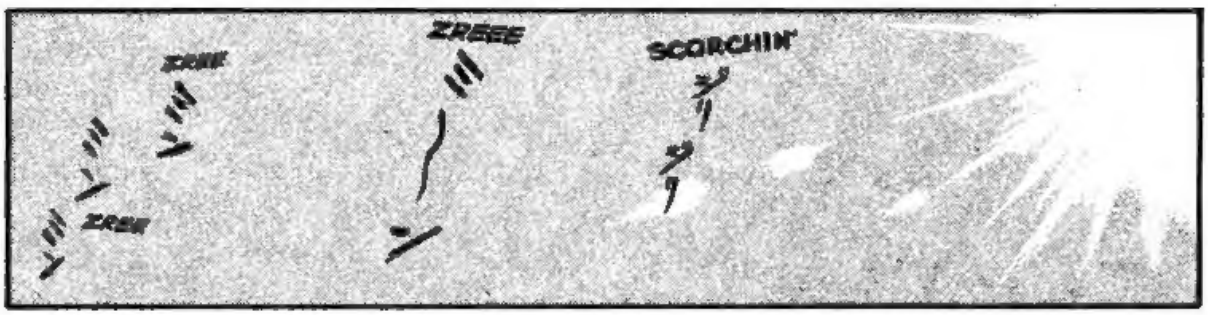
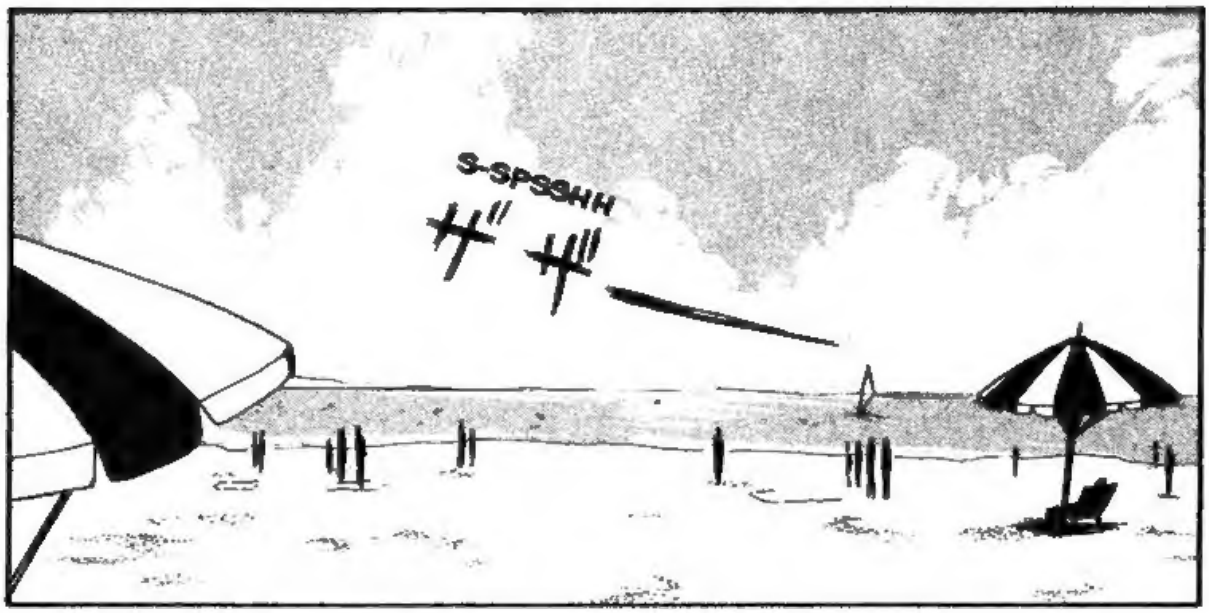
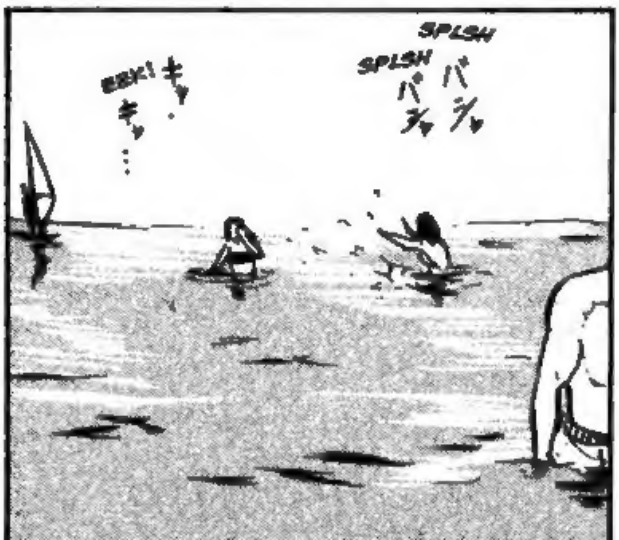
CHAPTER 142: **SOMETIME BLUES**



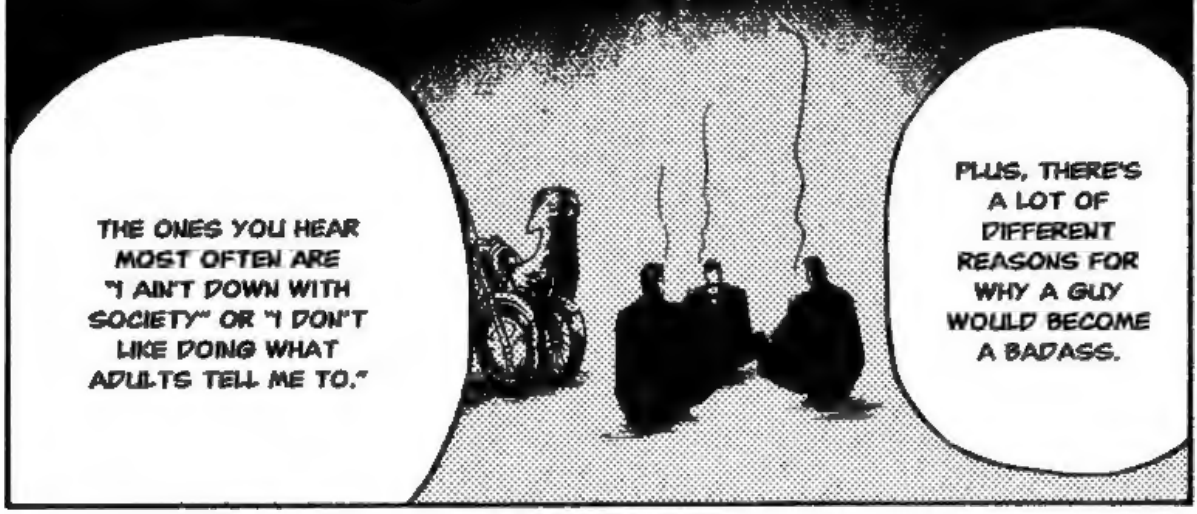




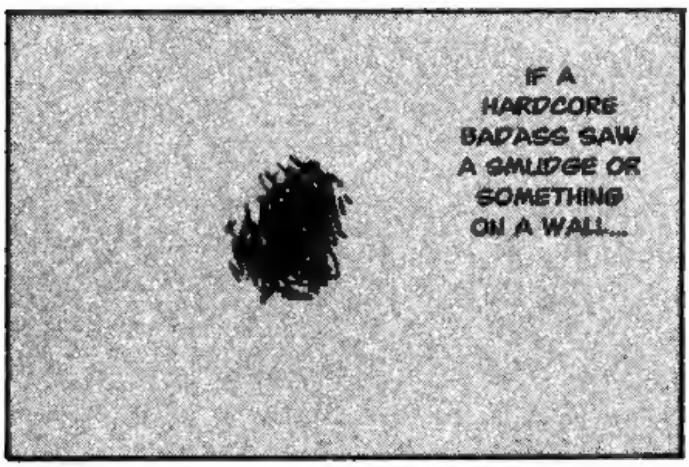
SURE.
WOULD YOU MIND PUTTING SOME SUN-SCREEN ON MY BACK?
CROMARTIE 2ND-YEAR STUDENTS
THE FOUR GREAT ONES
(ALL FIVE OF THEM)

WOW. YOU'RE PRETTY THOROUGH, AREN'T YOU, TOMMY?
NOW I SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET A NICE, EVEN TAN.

"LIVE HARD AND LIVE FAST." THAT'S THE MOTTO OF A TRUE BADASS.
YOU KEEP ACTING LIKE A GIRL AND YOUR UNDERLINGS ARE GONNA WALK ALL OVER YOU.
HUH?!
YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR PROBLEM IS? YOU'RE TOO DAMN METI-CULOUS.
QUIT YELLING. YOU'LL JUST RUIN YOUR MAKEUP.
DAMMIT, IGA-CHAN! WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?!
FOR ONE THING, WE PAY A LOT OF ATTENTION TO HOW WE LOOK. HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU SEEN A TOTALLY BAD DUDE WHO ALWAYS HAS TO HAVE A COMB ON HIM? HECK, SOME BADASSES HATE GETTING THEIR SCHOOL UNIFORMS DIRTY SO MUCH THAT THEY EVEN CARRY LINT BRUSHES!
Of course, whether that's COOL or not is a different story.
HM?
BUT Y'KNOW, THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT BADASSES ARE PRETTY METICULOUS ABOUT.

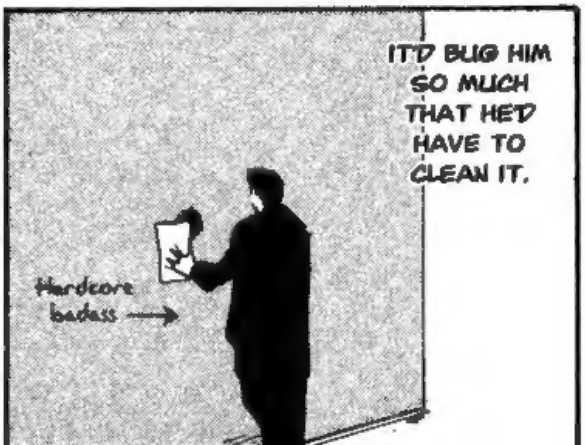

THE ONES YOU HEAR MOST OFTEN ARE "I AIN'T DOWN WITH SOCIETY" OR "I DON'T LIKE DOING WHAT ADULTS TELL ME TO."
PLUS, THERE'S A LOT OF DIFFERENT REASONS FOR WHY A GUY WOULD BECOME A BADASS.

HMM, I SEE YOUR POINT. SO "BADASSES" ARE BASICALLY GUYS WHO PAY A LOT OF ATTENTION TO DETAIL, IS THAT IT?
COULDN'T THESE GUYS HAVE BECOME BADASSES **BECAUSE** THEY'RE SO METICULOUS? I MEAN, SOMEONE WHO'S DARING, DETERMINED AND A LITTLE ROUGH AROUND THE EDGES WOULDN'T PAY ATTENTION TO EVERY LITTLE THING SOCIETY OR THEIR TEACHERS TELL HIM, RIGHT?


IF A HARDCORE BADASS SAW A SMUDGE OR SOMETHING ON A WALL...

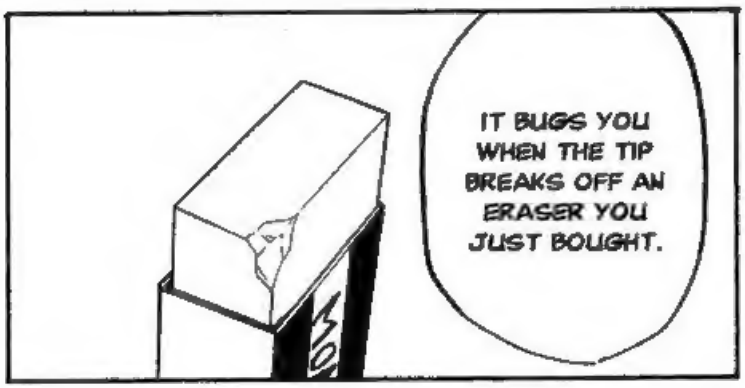
IN THAT CASE...

WHAT'S MORE...

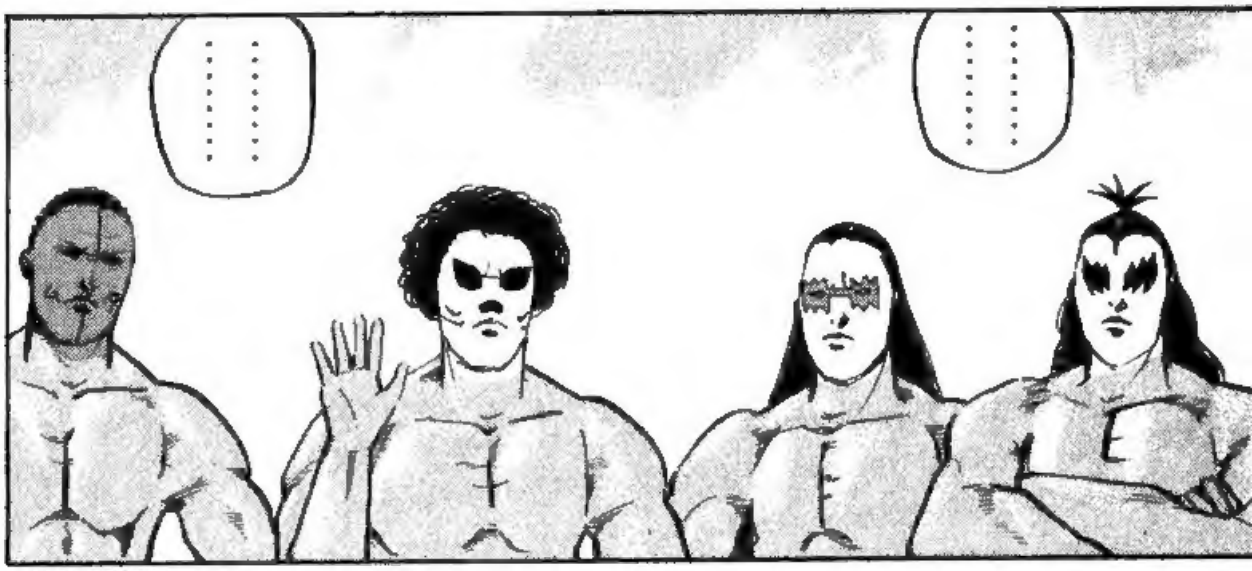

IT'D BUG HIM SO MUCH THAT HE'D HAVE TO CLEAN IT.
Hardcore badass

THIS AIN'T DOIN' IT FOR ME.
HE'D START TO FEEL LIKE IT STUCK OUT TOO MUCH.
IF THE PLACE HE WIPED ENDED UP BEING CLEANER THAN THE REST OF THE WALL...
AND WHEN IT WAS OVER, HE'D BREATHE A BIG SIGH OF RELIEF.
YEAH, I'M BAD.
SO HE'D HAVE TO CLEAN THE WHOLE WALL.
SKSH
SKSH
NO, I THINK HE'S ON TO SOMETHING. MAYBE THAT'S WHAT A TRUE BADASS REALLY IS, AND WE'VE JUST NEVER RUN INTO ONE.
THAT MIGHT BE TOO METIC-ULOUS.
IS THAT HOW IT WORKS?
YEAH, MAYBE WE'VE JUST NEVER NOTICED IT BEFORE. ALRIGHT, I'M GONNA FIND OUT WHICH OF US ADHERES TO TRUE BADASSNESS!
HUH?!
WAIT A MINUTE. MAYBE ONE OF US IS A TRUE BADASS!

BY USING A SIMPLE TEST TO SEE IF YOU FIT THE RIGHT DELINQUENCY PROFILE. OK, RAISE YOUR HAND IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING APPLY TO YOU.
AND HOW ARE YOU GOING TO DO THAT?


IT BUGS YOU WHEN THE TIP BREAKS OFF AN ERASER YOU JUST BOUGHT.

NO. 1:

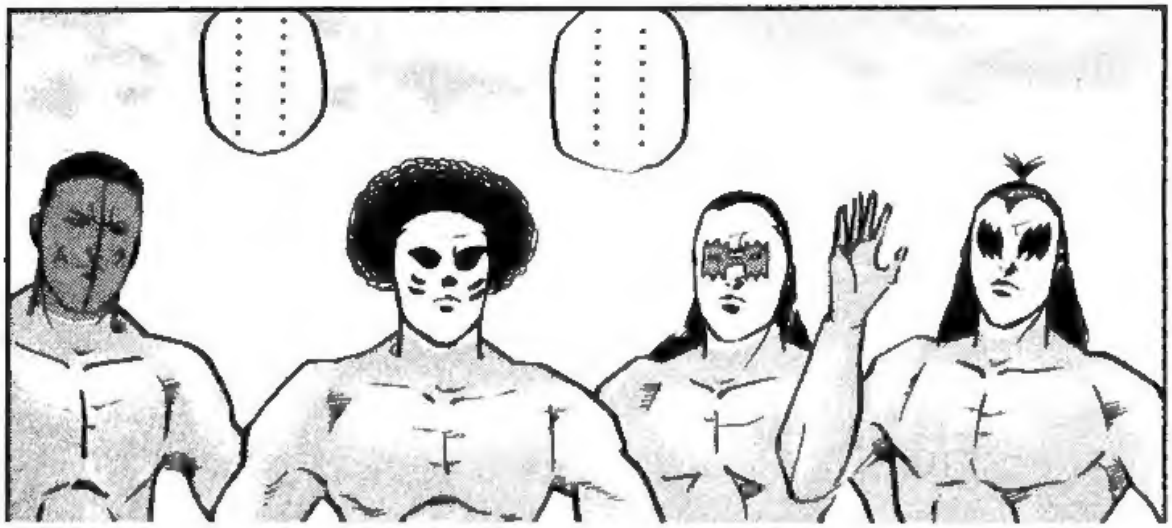


*ON FACE: "MUTA."

AFTER GIVING A GIRL YOUR PHONE NUMBER, YOU'VE KEPT YOUR CELL PHONE ON FOR 10 DAYS STRAIGHT.
NO. 2:

WHEN YOU SIT ON THE TRAIN, YOU ALWAYS TAKE THE FAR END OF THE SEAT.
NO. 3:

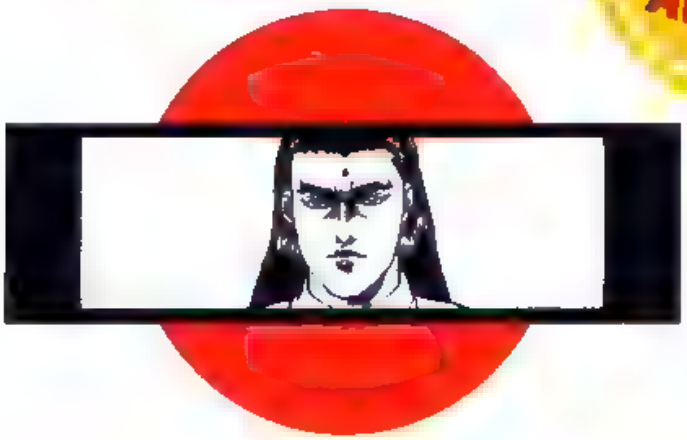
YOU'RE ACTUALLY A FAN OF TELEVISION PERSONALITY RYUTARO KAMIOKA.
NO. 4:



LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE FOUR GREAT ONES.

CROMARTIE HIGH SCHOOL

WINNER OF THE Kodansha Manga Award



"Preposterous and laugh-out-loud funny!"

— *Library Journal*

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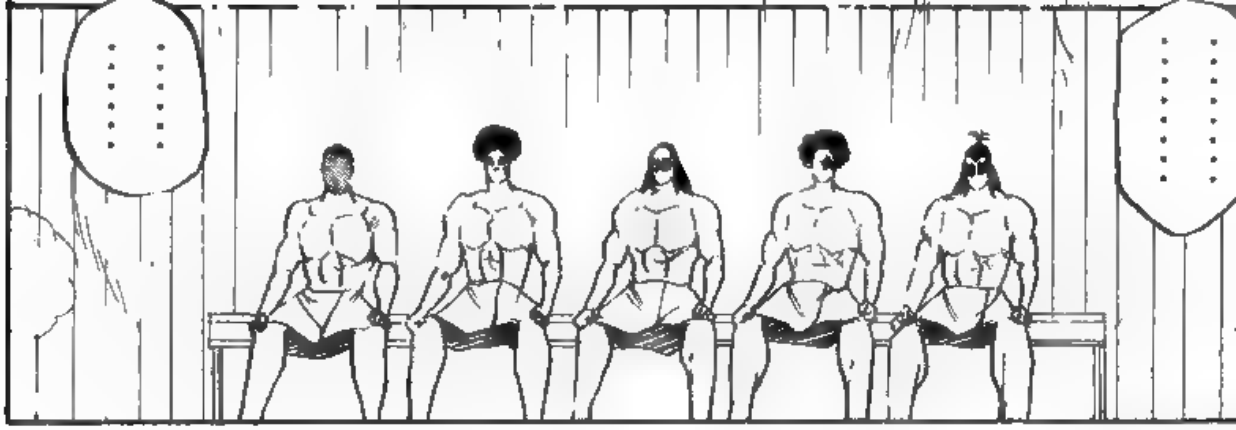
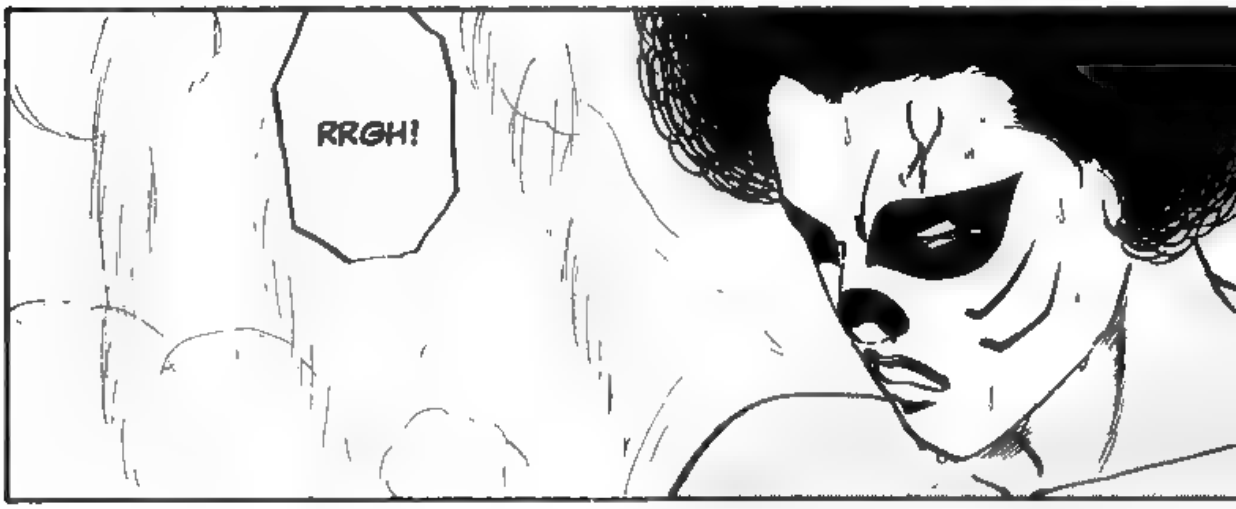
CROMARTIE HIGH SCHOOL

VOL. 7

Eiji Nonaka

CHAPTER 143: **HOTTER THAN HELL**




RRGH!

SORRY. IT'S JUST SO HOT IN HERE... I THINK I'M GONNA PUKE.

B-BLGH!
WHAT'S THE MAT-TER?!

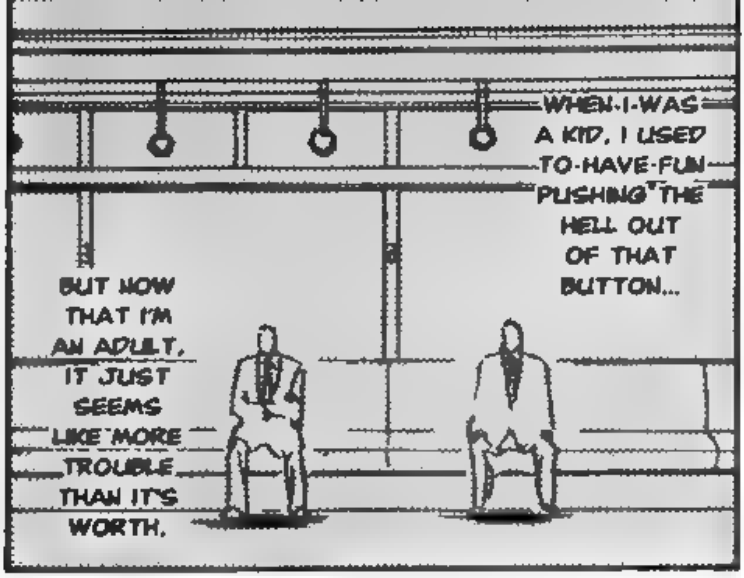
BUT IF I LEAVE NOW...
THEN GET THE HELL OUT!

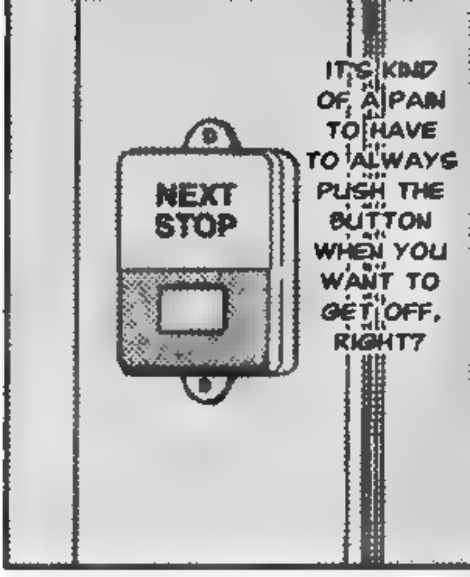
"LOST"?
I'LL FEEL LIKE I'VE LOST.

WELL, IT'S SOMETHING I THOUGHT UP ON MY OWN. WITH, LIKE, RULES AND STUFF. ANYWAY, IT'S JUST A CONTEST AGAINST MYSELF. IT'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU GUYS.
I had no idea.
WHAT, THIS IS A CONTEST?

SOMEHOW, I GET IT INTO MY HEAD THAT IF I WIN THEN MAYBE SOMETHING GOOD WILL HAPPEN TO ME THE NEXT DAY. JEEZ, LISTEN TO ME. I SOUND LIKE A KID!
IT'S JUST, AT TIMES LIKE THIS IT ALMOST GETS TO BE A MATTER OF PRIDE. LIKE, "THERE'S NO WAY I'M GONNA BE THE FIRST ONE OUT!"

YEAH. LIKE, WHEN YOU'RE RIDING THE BUS...
YOU DO?
YEAH, BUT I CAN SEE WHERE YOU'RE COMING FROM. I DO THE SAME KIND OF THING.
EVEN IF I DO WIN, IT DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING!


WHEN I WAS A KID, I USED TO HAVE FUN PUSHING THE HELL OUT OF THAT BUTTON...
BUT NOW THAT I'M AN ADULT, IT JUST SEEMS LIKE MORE TROUBLE THAN IT'S WORTH.


NEXT STOP
IT'S KIND OF A PAIN TO HAVE TO ALWAYS PUSH THE BUTTON WHEN YOU WANT TO GET OFF, RIGHT?

THAT MEANS WHOEVER FINALLY PUSHES IT IS THE LOSER.
THAT'S WHY I WAIT FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO PUSH THE BUTTON...BUT THEN I THINK THAT THEY ARE ALL THINKING THE SAME THING.

EITHER WAY, WHAT DOES IT MATTER?
MM, I GET THE FEELING IT'S NOT QUITE THE SAME.
THAT'S A LOT LIKE A CONTEST, RIGHT?

WHAT PURPOSE DOES IT SERVE?! MAKING A CONTEST OUT OF THOSE SORTS OF THINGS IS JUST SENSELESS!
WHETHER IT'S BEING "BAD" ENOUGH TO STAND THE HEAT OR REFUSING TO PUSH THE STOP BUTTON ON THE BUS...

. . . . . .
BUT ISN'T GETTING FIRED UP OVER THINGS THAT DON'T MAKE SENSE WHAT BEING A MAN IS ALL ABOUT?
DOING WHAT YOU WANT AND WANTING NOTHING IN RETURN...THE WAY I SEE IT, THAT'S WHAT [redacted] TRUE MAN!
HMM. TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST...
WHY DON'T WE ASK OUR BOSS WHAT HE THINKS? WHAT'S YOUR TAKE, BOSS?
I FIND IT SENSELESS TO DO THINGS THAT MAKE NO SENSE.
HUH?!
THAT'S ONE [redacted] OPINION!
YOU MEAN YOU'VE NEVER GOTTEN SENSELESSLY FIRED UP OVER SOMETHING, LIKE SOME STUPID OBLIGATION OR A FRIENDSHIP THAT'S GOING NOWHERE?!
I MEAN, WHERE'S THE SENSE IN IT? IF THEY'RE "SENSELESS," THEN THERE IS NONE!
YEAH, I GUESS YOU'VE GOT A POINT.

BUT NOTHING! LISTEN, THE SENSELESSNESS I'M TALKING ABOUT IS THE KIND OF **SENSELESS** SENSELESSNESS THAT MAKES NO SENSE AT ALL!

I GUESS SO, BUT...

FOOL! THOSE THINGS AREN'T SENSELESS! FRIENDSHIPS AND OBLIGATIONS ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS!

FINE. I'LL JUST SHOW YOU WHAT I MEAN WITH ONE OF MY PRIZED SUPER-SENSELESS STORIES.

HOW COULD YOU NOT UNDERSTAND AN EXPLANATION LIKE THAT?!

THIS IS GETTING A LITTLE TOUGH TO UNDERSTAND...

HER HOBBIES WERE SKIING AND GOLF. SHE AND HER BOYFRIEND HAD BROKEN UP TWO MONTHS EARLIER.

Satoko

IT CONCERNS ONE SATOKO SATONAKA (AGE 21), A COLLEGE STUDENT.

THAT'S RIGHT. AND DON'T GO LOOKING FOR ANY SENSE, BECAUSE THERE ISN'T ANY. NOW LISTEN UP.

A SUPER-SENSELESS STORY?!

THEY ANNOYED HER MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE.

SHE REALLY HATED THE PICKLED *FUKUJINZUKE* VEGETABLES THEY SERVED WITH IT.

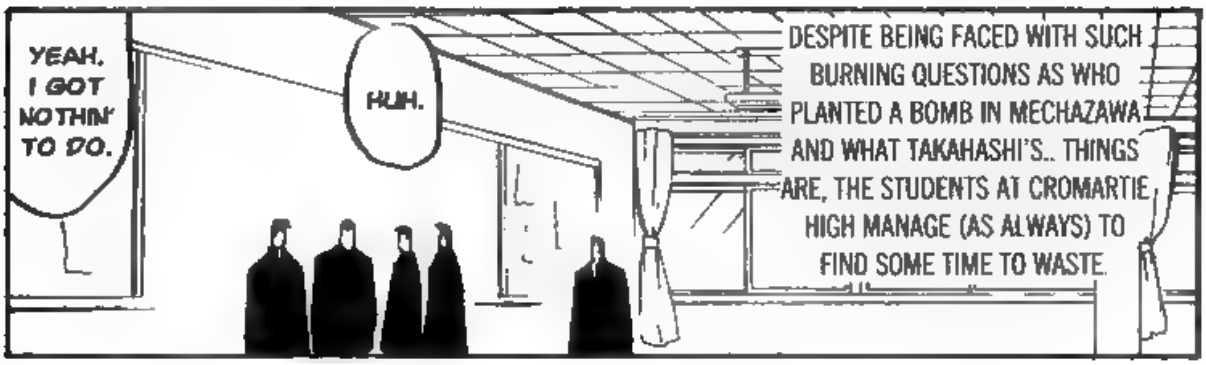
These

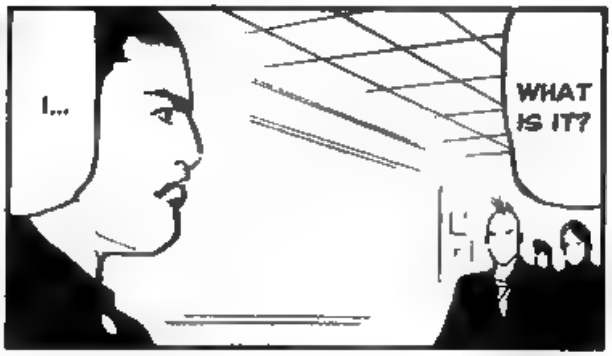
SATOKO LOVED CURRY, THE KIND OF NORMAL CURRY YOU COULD GET AT ANY CURRY PLACE. THERE WAS JUST ONE PROBLEM:

BUT AT MANY RESTAURANTS, IT'S ADDED TO THE PLATE BEFORE YOU EVEN GET YOUR CURRY.
OF COURSE, A LOT OF PLACES LEAVE FUKUJINZUKE IN LITTLE CONTAINERS SO CUSTOMERS CAN ADD IT IF THEY WANT...
SO THIS WASN'T A PROBLEM SHE COULD SOLVE JUST BY PUSHING THEM TO THE SIDE OF HER PLATE.
SHE EVEN HATED IT WHEN THE JUICE FROM THOSE VEGETABLES MIXED WITH THE RICE...
BUT HOW COULD SHE AVOID THE FUKUJINZUKE? SATOKO SPENT MANY DAYS PONDERING THIS.
THIS TROUBLED HER GREATLY. THE RESTAURANT SERVED AN INCREDIBLE PLATE OF CURRY...
WHERE THE EMPLOYEES WOULD ADD A GENEROUS HELPING OF FUKUJINZUKE.
HERE YOU GO!
SATOKO OFTEN WENT TO ONE PARTICULAR RESTAURANT...
NO PROBLEM. YOU CAN LEAVE 'EM!
UM, I DID SAY NO FUKUJINZUKE.
SHE COMPLAINED ABOUT IT, BUT...
HERE YOU GO!
These
HOWEVER, THE EMPLOYEES WERE SO USED TO ADDING FUKUJINZUKE THAT THEY SOON FORGOT HER REQUEST.
SURE!
COULD YOU PLEASE HOLD THE FUKUJINZUKE?
FINALLY, SHE RESOLVED THAT WHEN ORDERING, SHE WOULD SAY:
WHAT'S MORE, THE EMPLOYEES' TONE MADE IT SOUND LIKE THEY WERE DOING HER A **FAVOR** BY INCLUDING THEM. AND THAT ONLY MADE HER ANGRIER. HER CURRY RUINED, SATOKO WAS FILLED WITH RAGE. SHE WANTED TO SCREAM...HOW COULD SHE VENT THIS ANGER?!
SATOKO WAS FURIOUS. IT WASN'T AN ISSUE OF "LEAVING THEM." LIKE I SAID, SHE HATED IT WHEN THE FUKUJINZUKE JUICE SOAKED INTO THE RICE, SO SHE'D END UP HAVING TO LEAVE HALF OF IT UNEATEN.

DON'T STAY IN THAT SAUNA TOO LONG.

CHAPTER 144: YOU NEVER GIVE ME YOUR NAME


YEAH. I GOT NOTHIN' TO DO.
HUH.
DESPITE BEING FACED WITH SUCH BURNING QUESTIONS AS WHO PLANTED A BOMB IN MECHAZAWA AND WHAT TAKAHASHI'S.. THINGS ARE, THE STUDENTS AT CROMARTIE HIGH MANAGE (AS ALWAYS) TO FIND SOME TIME TO WASTE.

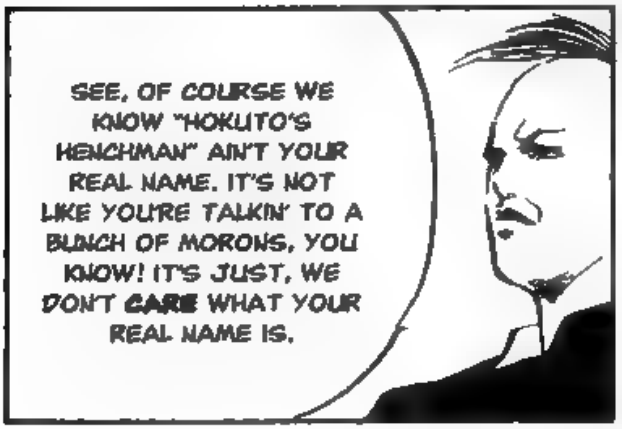


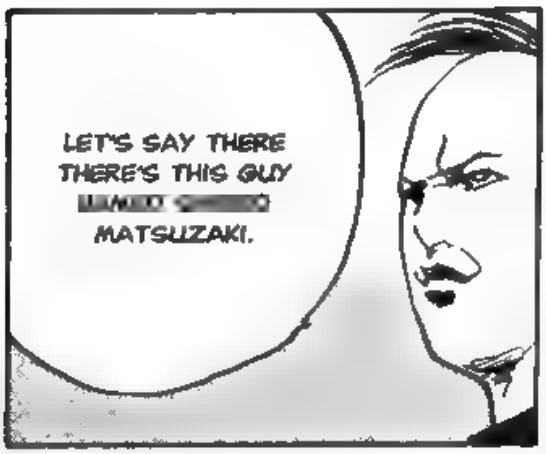
BECAUSE OF SADA, THE CORPS HAVE SPLIT INTO TWO FACTIONS, AND I... I CAN'T STAND BEING UNDER HOKUTO FOR MUCH LONGER.
HE'S JUST SO SHAMELESS. I'M REALLY STARTING TO HATE HIM!
HUH?!

IF YOU STOP BEING HOKUTO'S HENCHMAN...
WHAT IS IT, HAYA-SHIDA?
WAIT A MIN-UTE.
HUH?!
WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO CALL YOU?
NO, SEE, I HAVE A NAME. IT'S--
YOUR NAME'S "HOKUTO'S HENCHMAN," RIGHT? SO IF YOU STOP BEING HIS HENCHMAN, WE'RE NOT GONNA KNOW WHAT TO CALL YOU.

NO, LISTEN!
THAT DOESN'T SOUND VERY EXCITIN'. I MEAN, IT'S NOT LIKE HE'S MY HENCHMAN.
YEAH. I GUESS WE'LL JUST CALL HIM "HENCHMAN" FROM NOW ON.
IF HE STOPS BEIN' HOKUTO'S HENCHMAN, HE'LL JUST BE A REGULAR HENCHMAN.
CUT IT OUT ALREADY!
YOU MUST BECOME SOME-ONE ELSE'S HENCH-MAN.
IN THAT CASE, THERE IS BUT ONE RECOURSE. WITHOUT DELAY...
WHAT?!
YOU JUST DON'T GET IT, DO YOU?
LISTEN UP, DAMMIT! MY NAME IS--
IS HOKUTO'S HENCHMAN.
I'M ONLY GONNA SAY THIS ONCE MORE. YOUR

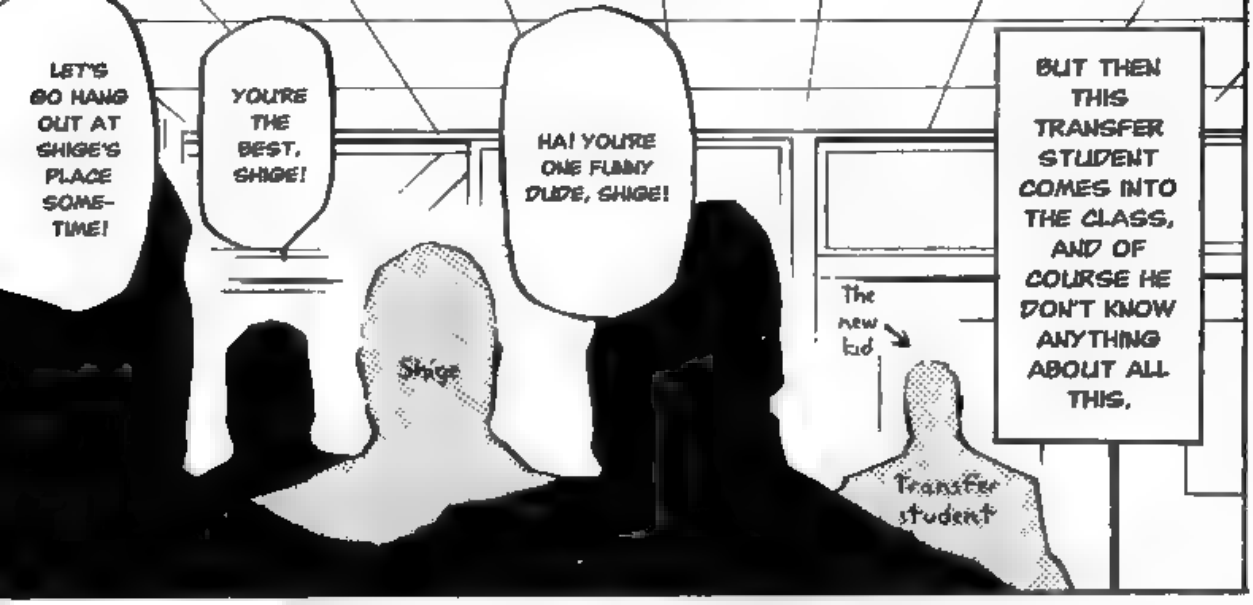
YEAH, IT'S A DONE DEAL.
IS THAT AN ULTIMA-TUM?!


SEE, OF COURSE WE KNOW "HOKUTO'S HENCHMAN" AIN'T YOUR REAL NAME. IT'S NOT LIKE YOU'RE TALKIN' TO A BUNCH OF MORONS, YOU KNOW! IT'S JUST, WE DON'T **CARE** WHAT YOUR REAL NAME IS.


LET'S SAY THERE THERE'S THIS GUY
[redacted]
MATSUZAKI.

LET ME EXPLAIN IT TO YA NICE AND SIMPLE.
WHY THE HELL NOT?!

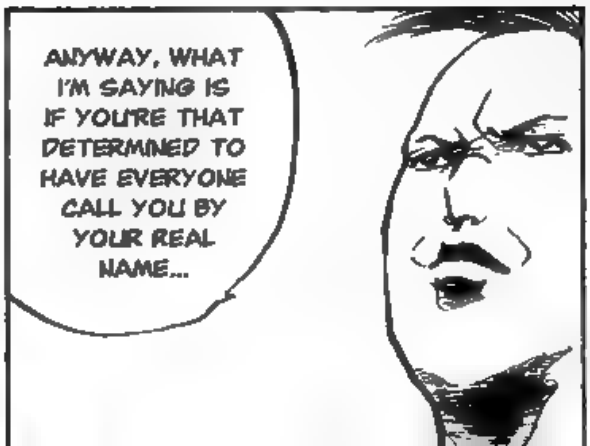
YOU DO YOUR HOMEWORK, SHIGE?
SHIGE! LET'S GO GET SOMETHIN' TO EAT!
YO, SHIGE! YOU FREE TODAY?
EVERYONE LOVES HIM, AND INSTEAD OF CALLIN' HIM BY HIS REAL NAME, THEY USE A NICKNAME: SHIGE.
Shige


LET'S GO HANG OUT AT SHIGE'S PLACE SOME-TIME!
YOU'RE THE BEST, SHIGE!
HA! YOU'RE ONE FUNNY DUDE, SHIGE!
BUT THEN THIS TRANSFER STUDENT COMES INTO THE CLASS, AND OF COURSE HE DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT ALL THIS.
Shige
The new kid
Transfer student

AND WHADDYA THINK HAPPENED WHEN HE CALLED HIM THAT?
. . . . . .
SAY, MATSUZAKI-KUN?
SO WHEN THIS NEW GUY SPEAKS UP...
Shige
Transfer Student

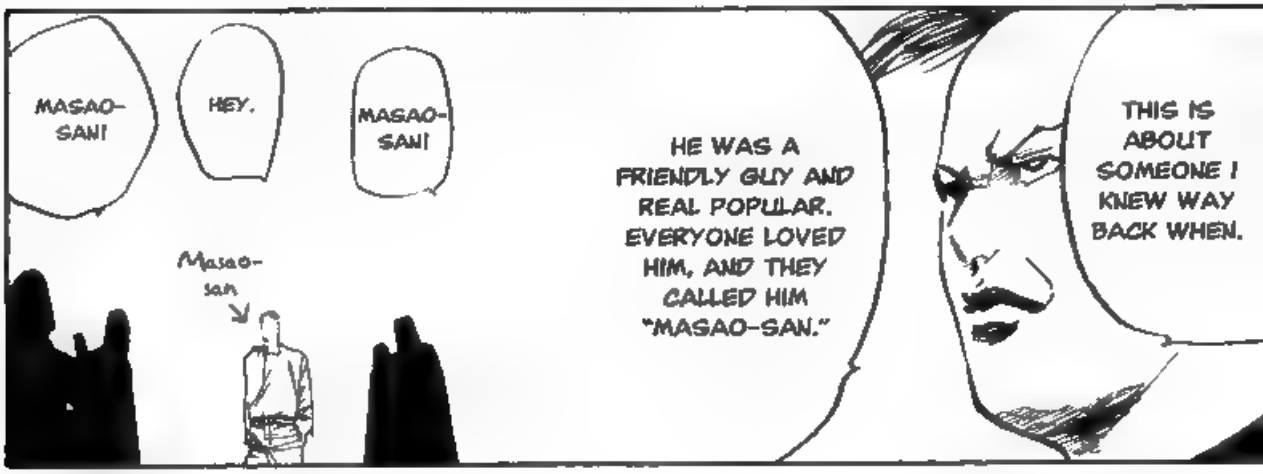
I THINK IT'S AN EXAGGERATION TO SAY THE SCHOOL WOULD GO "FRIGGIN NUTS." I IMAGINE IT'D BE MORE, LIKE, PEOPLE JUST DIDN'T CARE FOR IT THAT MUCH.
I CAN TOTALLY IMAGINE IT. UGH, IT'S SENDIN' SHIVERS UP MY SPINE!
THE SCHOOL WENT FRIGGIN NUTS IS WHAT HAPPENED.

WHAT?
YOU'LL KILL THE MOOD AT OUR SCHOOL AND YOU'LL LOSE ALL YOUR PRESENCE.

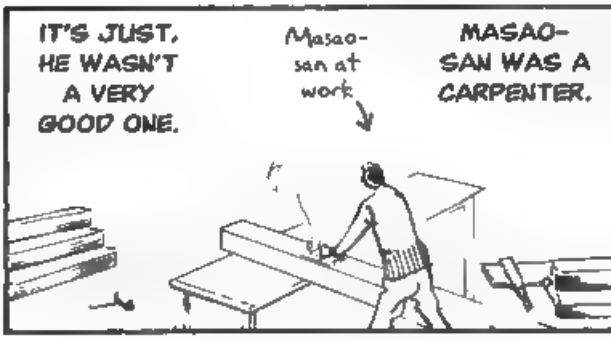

ANYWAY, WHAT I'M SAYING IS IF YOU'RE THAT DETERMINED TO HAVE EVERYONE CALL YOU BY YOUR REAL NAME...

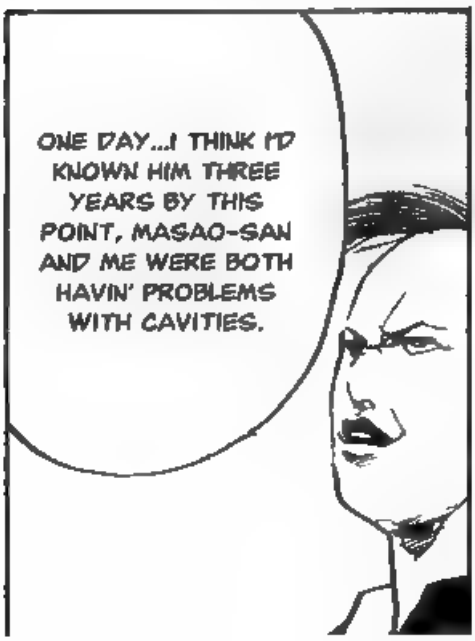
HUH?
DON'T TAKE IT SO HARD, MAN. HERE, LEMME TELL YOU A STORY.

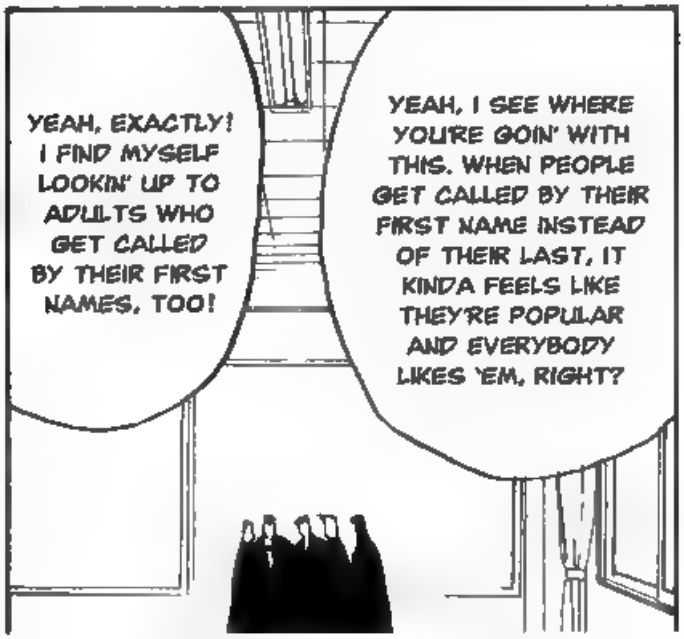
DAMMIT! THE RAGE...THE SORROW! HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO DEAL WITH THIS?!


MASAO-SAN!
HEY.
MASAO-SAN!
Masao-san
HE WAS A FRIENDLY GUY AND REAL POPULAR. EVERYONE LOVED HIM, AND THEY CALLED HIM "MASAO-SAN."
THIS IS ABOUT SOMEONE I KNEW WAY BACK WHEN.

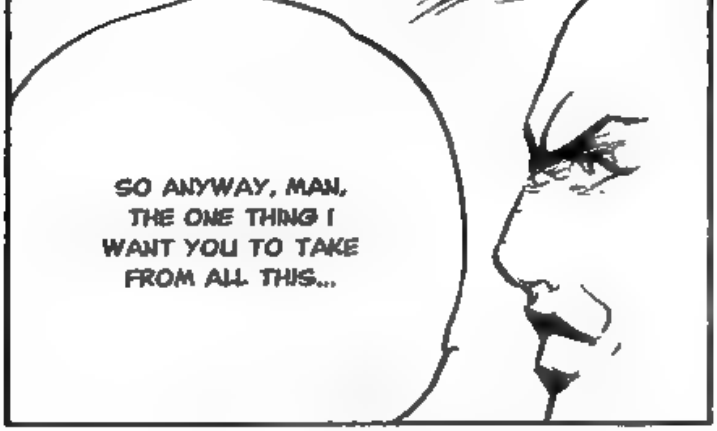
I WAS JUST A KID, BUT EVEN BACK THEN I LOOKED UP TO HIM.
HEY, MASAO-SAN!
HEY.
MASAO-SAN!
STILL, EVERY-ONE IN TOWN LIKED HIM.

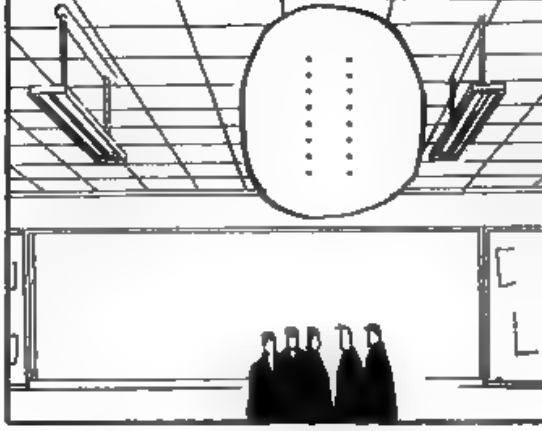

IT'S JUST, HE WASN'T A VERY GOOD ONE.
Masao-san at work
MASAO-SAN WAS A CARPENTER.

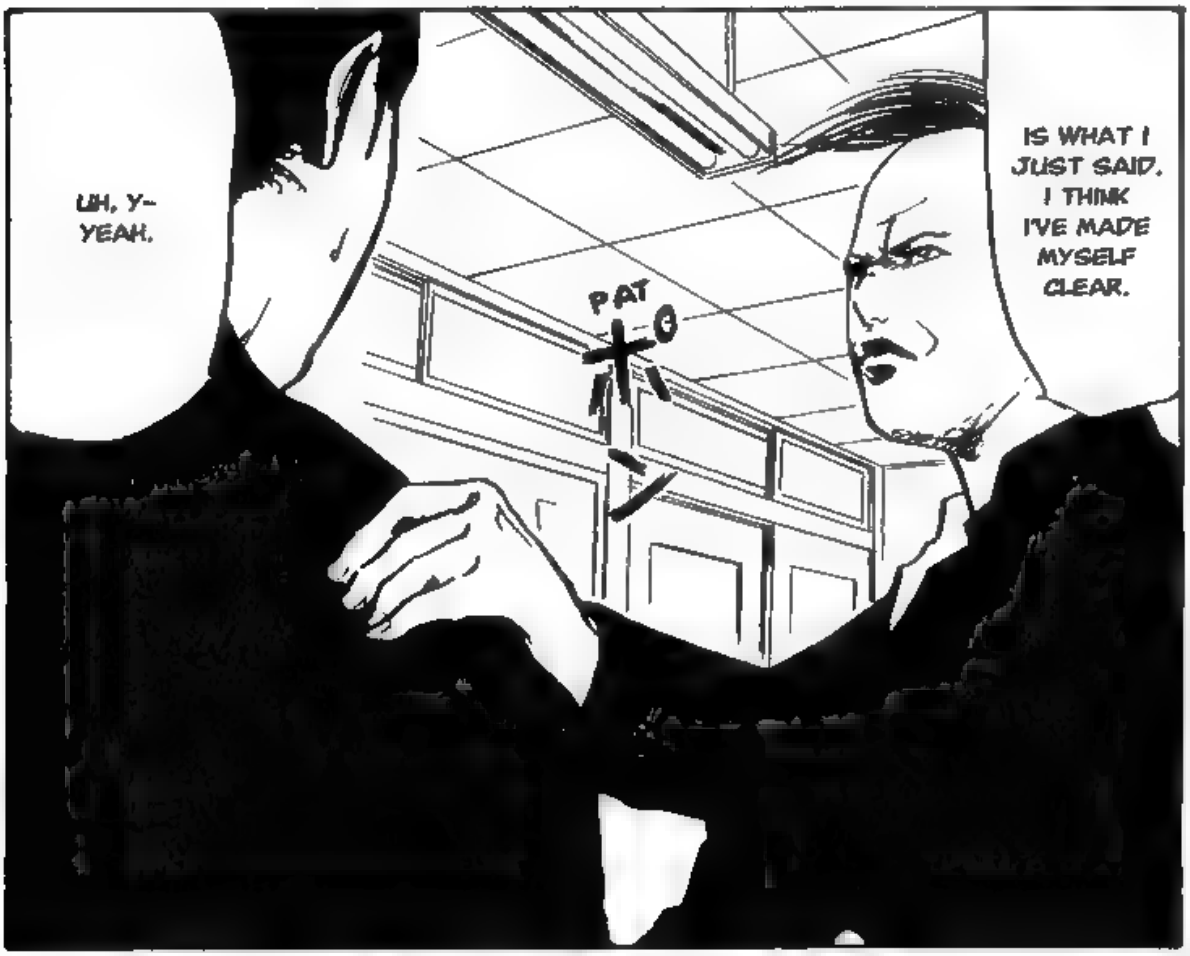

ONE DAY...I THINK I'D KNOWN HIM THREE YEARS BY THIS POINT, MASAO-SAN AND ME WERE BOTH HAVIN' PROBLEMS WITH CAVITIES.


YEAH, EXACTLY! I FIND MYSELF LOOKIN' UP TO ADULTS WHO GET CALLED BY THEIR FIRST NAMES, TOO!
YEAH, I SEE WHERE YOU'RE GOIN' WITH THIS. WHEN PEOPLE GET CALLED BY THEIR FIRST NAME INSTEAD OF THEIR LAST, IT KINDA FEELS LIKE THEY'RE POPULAR AND EVERYBODY LIKES 'EM, RIGHT?

HUH?
THE NEXT THING I KNEW, THE NURSE HAD COME OUT AND SAID THE MOST SHOCKING THING I'D EVER HEARD!
AND WE WERE SITTIN' IN THE WAITING ROOM FOR THE NURSE TO COME CALL OUR NAMES.
WE WENT TO THE DENTIST'S OFFICE TO-GETHER...
WHAT?
"KENJI MASAO"?!
OK.
KENJI MASAO! PLEASE COME TO THE EXAMINATION ROOM.
THAT'S RIGHT. IN THAT ONE SECOND, I FELT LIKE I'D BEEN BETRAYED. THREE YEARS I'D KNOWN THE GUY AND I NEVER HAD A CLUE.
THIS WHOLE TIME, PEOPLE WAS JUST CALLIN' HIM BY HIS LAST NAME, THE SAME AS THEY DO FOR ANYONE!
B-BUT THAT MEANS ...
THAT'S RIGHT. MASAO WASN'T HIS FIRST NAME AT ALL-- IT WAS HIS LAST NAME!
TO ME, MASAO-SAN WAS STILL MASAO-SAN.
THE THING IS, ONCE I STOPPED TO THINK ABOUT IT, I REALIZED IT DIDN'T MATTER IF "MASAO" WAS HIS LAST NAME OR HIS FIRST.



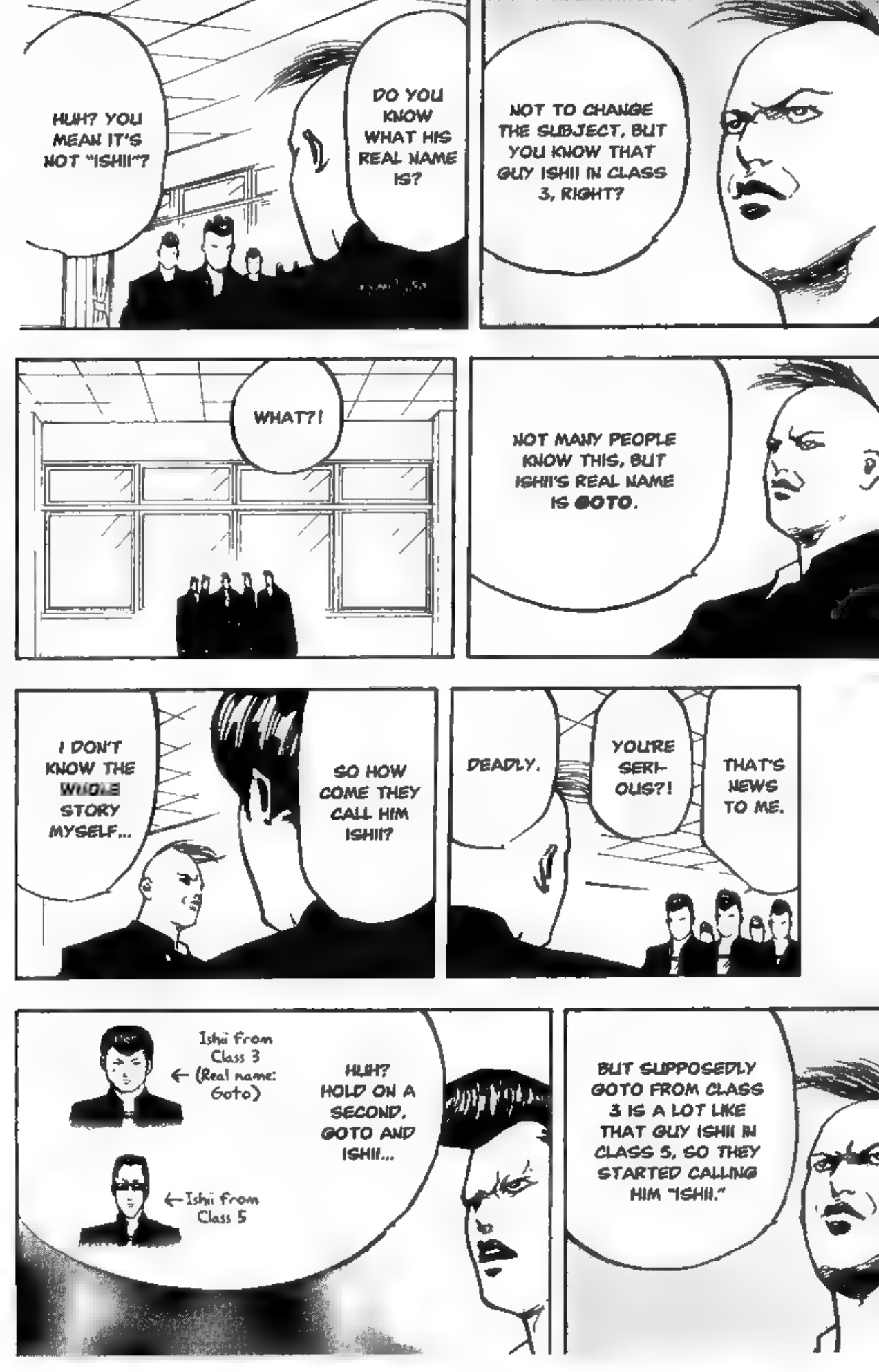


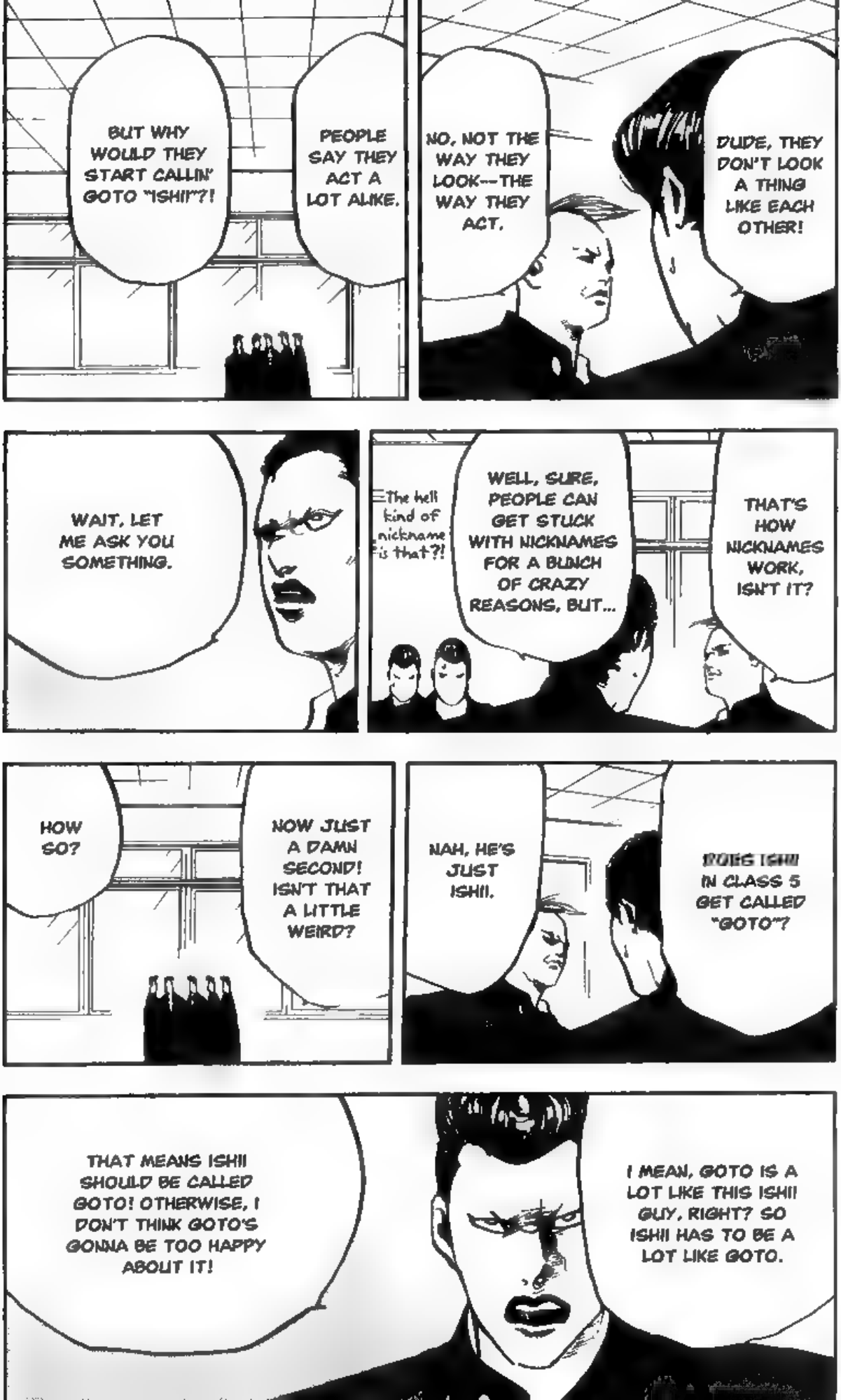


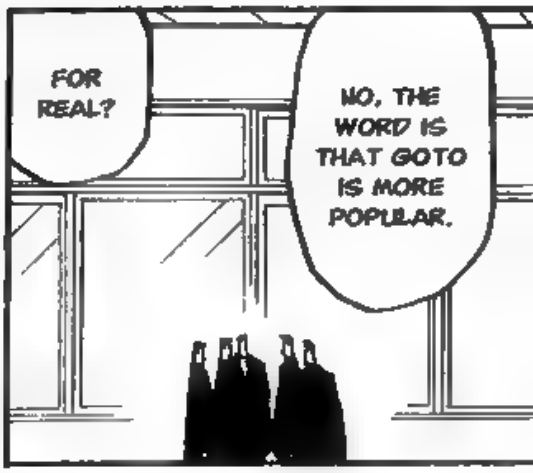
MASAO-SAN, YOU ROCK.

CHAPTER 145: THE BALLAD OF ISHII AND GOTO

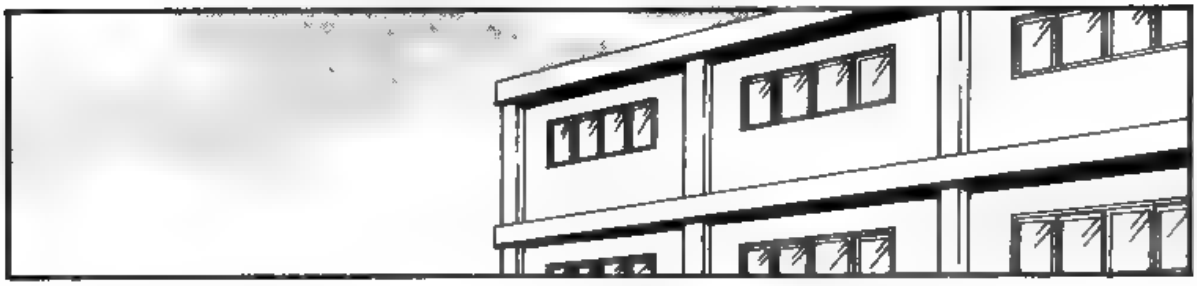
YOU'RE DAMN RIGHT! YOU GUYS ARE ALWAYS GANGING UP ON ME AND TREATING MY NAME LIKE SOME KIND OF JOKE!
Who the hell is this "Masao" guy anyhow?!
We're going to drag this joke out even further?
OH, YOU MEAN THAT THING ABOUT YOUR NAME?


HUH? YOU MEAN IT'S NOT "ISHII"?
DO YOU KNOW WHAT HIS REAL NAME IS?
NOT TO CHANGE THE SUBJECT, BUT YOU KNOW THAT GUY ISHII IN CLASS 3, RIGHT?
WHAT?!
NOT MANY PEOPLE KNOW THIS, BUT ISHII'S REAL NAME IS GOTO.
I DON'T KNOW THE WHOLE STORY MYSELF...
SO HOW COME THEY CALL HIM ISHII?
DEADLY.
YOU'RE SERI-OUS?!
THAT'S NEWS TO ME.
Ishii from Class 3 ← (Real name: Goto)
←Ishii from Class 5
HUH? HOLD ON A SECOND, GOTO AND ISHII...
BUT SUPPOSEDLY GOTO FROM CLASS 3 IS A LOT LIKE THAT GUY ISHII IN CLASS 5, SO THEY STARTED CALLING HIM "ISHII."


BUT WHY WOULD THEY START CALLIN' GOTO "ISHII"?!
PEOPLE SAY THEY ACT A LOT ALIKE.
NO, NOT THE WAY THEY LOOK--THE WAY THEY ACT.
DUDE, THEY DON'T LOOK A THING LIKE EACH OTHER!
WAIT, LET ME ASK YOU SOMETHING.
The hell kind of nickname is that?!
WELL, SURE, PEOPLE CAN GET STUCK WITH NICKNAMES FOR A BUNCH OF CRAZY REASONS, BUT...
THAT'S HOW NICKNAMES WORK, ISN'T IT?
HOW SO?
NOW JUST A DAMN SECOND! ISN'T THAT A LITTLE WEIRD?
NAH, HE'S JUST ISHII.
[illegible] ISHII IN CLASS 5 GET CALLED "GOTO"?
THAT MEANS ISHII SHOULD BE CALLED GOTO! OTHERWISE, I DON'T THINK GOTO'S GONNA BE TOO HAPPY ABOUT IT!
I MEAN, GOTO IS A LOT LIKE THIS ISHII GUY, RIGHT? SO ISHII HAS TO BE A LOT LIKE GOTO.



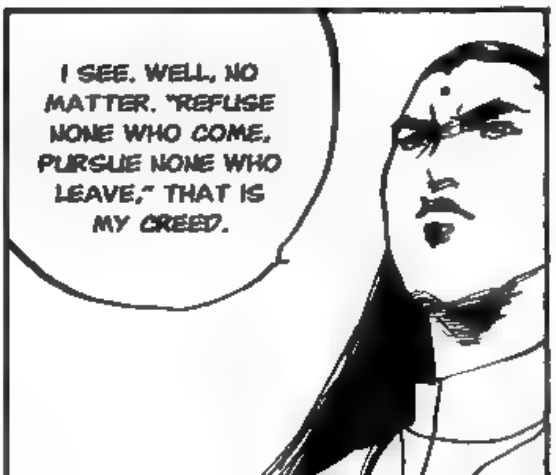
BUT FOR A SECOND, HE DID.



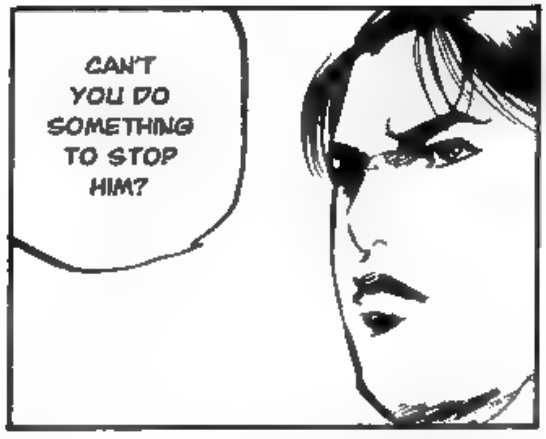
YOU WISH TO LEAVE THE GROUP?
WHAT'S THAT?

. . . . . .
THAT'S RIGHT. I'VE GIVEN IT A LOT OF THOUGHT...AND I'VE DECIDED I WANT TO WITHDRAW FROM THE HOKUTO CORPS.

HOKUTO-KUN, WAIT!
DO AS YOU WILL.


I SEE. WELL, NO MATTER. "REFUSE NONE WHO COME, PURSUE NONE WHO LEAVE," THAT IS MY CREED.

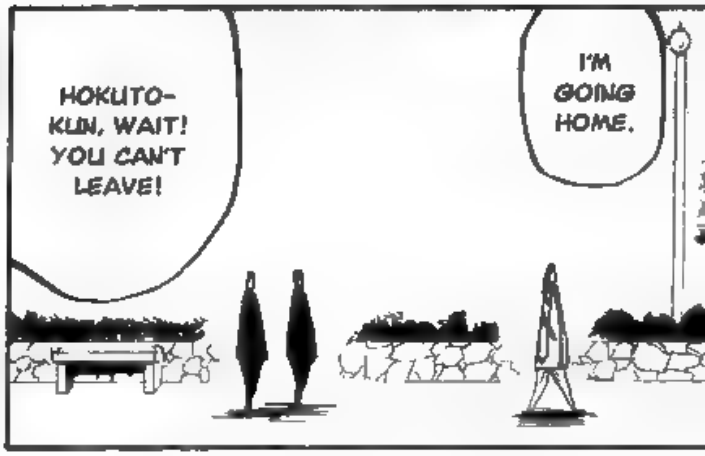
YOU DISAPPOINT ME, HOKUTO-KUN!
IF HE WISHES TO LEAVE, THE MATTER IS OUT OF MY HANDS.

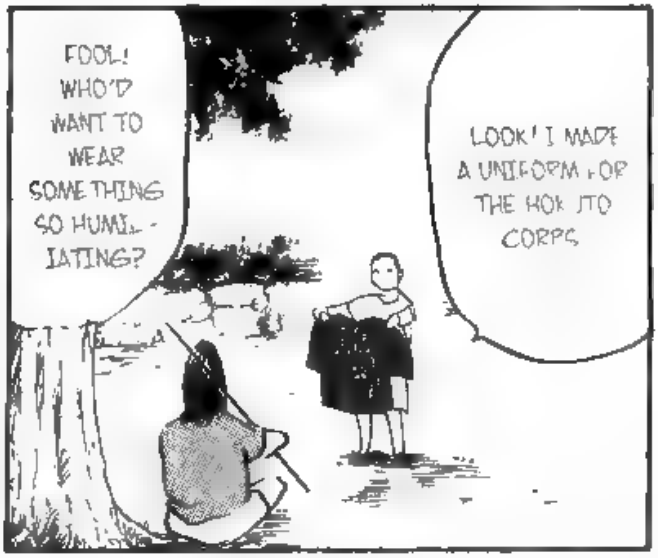

CAN'T YOU DO SOMETHING TO STOP HIM?

HMPH! ENOUGH OF THIS FOOLISH CHATTER.
STOP IT, KAMIYAMA. DON'T BLAME HOKUTO-SAN! I'M THE ONE WHO'S IN THE WRONG!
YOU MAY ACT COLD, BUT I'D ALWAYS BELIEVED THERE WAS MORE TO YOU ON THE INSIDE

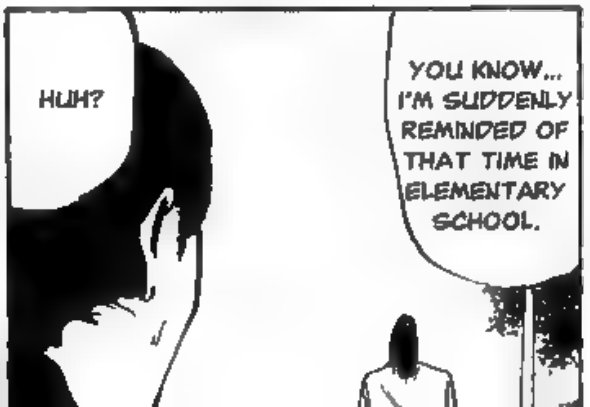
WHAT WAS THAT?

WOULD YOU TURN YOUR BACK ON SOMEONE WITH WHOM YOU'VE SHARED BOTH JOY AND SORROW? IS THAT THE KIND OF MAN YOU ARE?


HOKUTO-KUN, WAIT! YOU CAN'T LEAVE!
I'M GOING HOME.



*ON SHIRT "HOKUTO"



YEAH, THAT'LL PROBABLY MAKE HIM LEAVE THE CORPS FOR SURE.

MEETING OF THE FOUR GREAT ONES
HM. THERE HASN'T BEEN ANYTHING BIG GOING ON LATELY, AND I THINK IT'S BEGINNING TO AFFECT OUR ENTHUSIASM.

CHAPTER 147: **HARD LUCK MAN**

OH, I FOLLOW YOU. WE'RE ALREADY NOT THE FOUR GREAT ONES, BUT ADDING SOMEONE ELSE WOULD MAKE US EVEN **MORE** NOT THE FOUR GREAT ONES!
IF WE GO ADDING ANOTHER MEMBER, WON'T THAT TAKE US EVEN FURTHER AWAY FROM THE IDEA OF "FOUR" GREAT ONES?

IS THERE SOME RULE THAT SAYS WE CAN ONLY BE THE FOUR GREAT ONES IF WE HAVE FOUR MEMBERS? IF SO, HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN THE CHAMBARA TRIO HAVING FOUR MEMBERS?
WELL IF WE'RE NO LONGER THE FOUR GREAT ONES, WE CAN ADD HOWEVER THE HELL MANY PEOPLE WE WANT AND IT WOULDN'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE, WOULD IT?!

THIS IS THE FIRST I'VE HEARD OF US HAVING ANY BASIC PHILOSOPHIES...
YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT. DOIN' THINGS WITH RECKLESS ABANDON IS WHAT WE'RE ALL ABOUT!
LIVING FREE FROM THE RULES AND CONSTRAINTS OF SOCIETY IS ONE OF OUR BASIC PHILOSOPHIES!

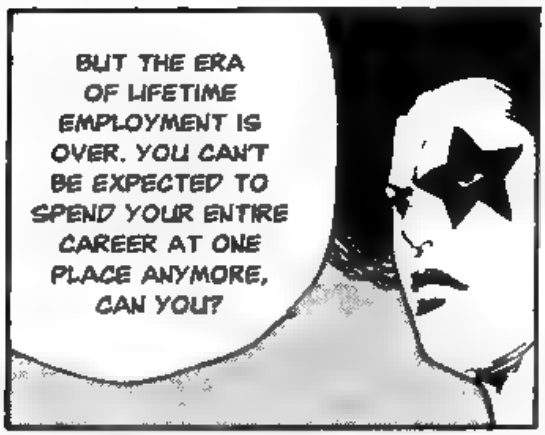
WELL, I DON'T KNOW HIS NAME, BUT I HEAR HE'LL BE DROPPING OUT OF ANOTHER GROUP BEFORE TOO MUCH LONGER.
WHO THE HECK IS HE?

ONE OF MY SOURCES HAS GIVEN ME A FEW LEADS. HERE, TAKE A LOOK AT THIS.
DID YOU HAVE A CANDIDATE IN MIND? I MEAN, IT'S NOT LIKE WE CAN TAKE IN JUST ANYONE.

HOLD ON A SECOND.
YEAH, SOUNDS GOOD TO ME. I'LL GO BRING HIM HERE AND WE CAN PAINT--
I ALSO HEAR HE'S EXTREMELY LOYAL. DON'T YOU THINK HE'D MAKE A GOOD ADDITION?
I DON'T KNOW. IT'S STILL KIND OF BUGGIN' ME.
I'M SURE THERE ARE A LOT OF FACTORS INVOLVED. LIKE, GROUP DYNAMICS AND SO ON.
IF THIS GUY'S SO LOYAL, WHY IS HE LEAVING HIS OLD GROUP?
SO, WHAT MADE YOU QUIT YOUR PREVIOUS JOB?
ONE OF THE THINGS THE INTER-VIEWER ASKED ME WAS:
WELL...THE TRUTH IS, I'VE GOTTEN PRETTY SICK OF MY PART-TIME JOB, SO I WENT AND APPLIED FOR A JOB SOMEWHERE ELSE.
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?
WHAT DID HE SAY?
AND WHAT DO YOU THINK HE SAID NEXT?
I GOT THE FEELING THAT IT JUST WASN'T THE JOB FOR ME.
THAT WAS MY ANSWER.
HE HAD ME COR-NERED. I HAD TO TRY WINGING IT.

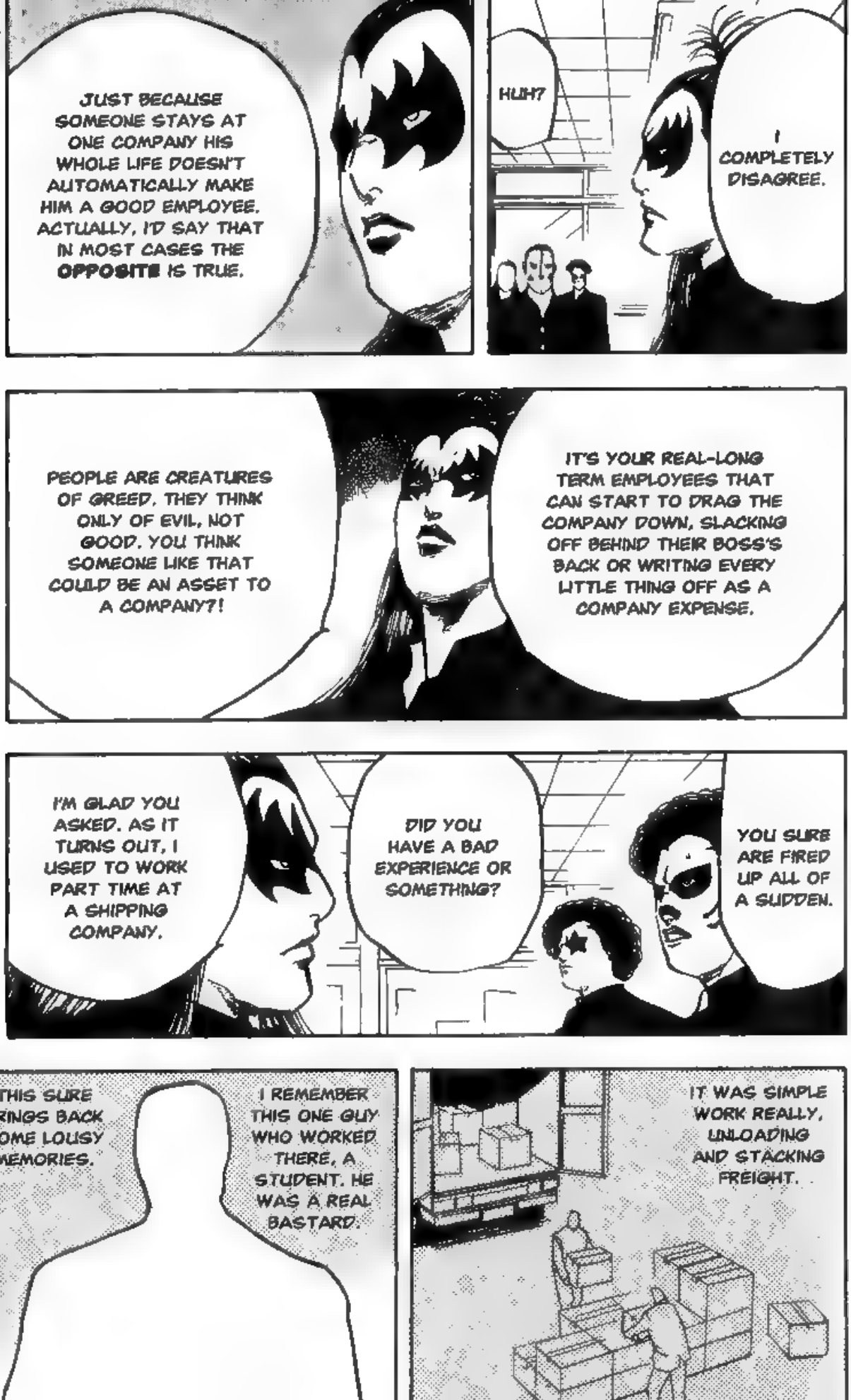
YEAH, THAT'S PRETTY MUCH WHAT HE SAID.
THAT OURS IS NOT "THE JOB FOR YOU"?
SO TELL ME, IF YOU WERE TO COME WORK FOR US, ISN'T IT POSSIBLE YOU'D SIMPLY END UP SAYING THE SAME SORT OF THING?

EXACTLY. WHICH MADE ME THINK THAT MAYBE THE GUY IN THE PICTURE IS... WELL, THAT KIND OF GUY.
SO QUITTERS WILL JUST KEEP ON QUITTING WITHOUT EVER SETTLING DOWN AND COMMITTING?
AH. HE MAKES A GOOD POINT.


BUT THE ERA OF LIFETIME EMPLOYMENT IS OVER. YOU CAN'T BE EXPECTED TO SPEND YOUR ENTIRE CAREER AT ONE PLACE ANYMORE, CAN YOU?

N-NO! I WAS JUST TALKING ABOUT MY JOB. THE FOUR GREAT ONES IS A WHOLE DIFFERENT STORY.
WAIT, DOES THIS MEAN YOU'LL END UP QUITTING OUR GROUP BEFORE LONG, TOO?

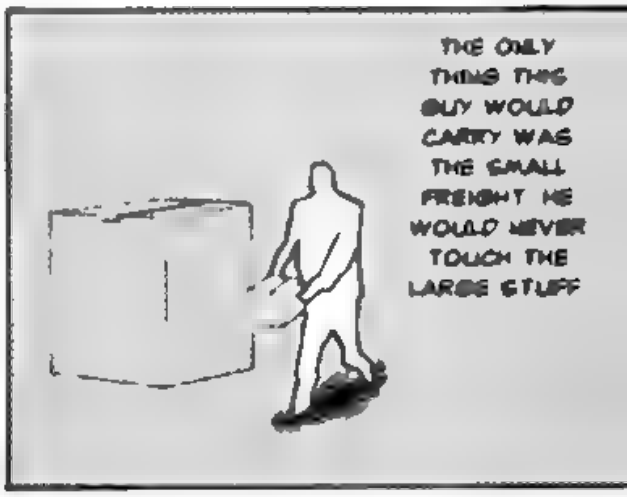
IF YOU LOOK AT IT FROM THE COMPANY'S POINT OF VIEW, IT'S ONLY NATURAL TO PREFER EMPLOYEES AND PART-TIMERS WHO'D WORK THERE FOREVER.
YEAH, BUT JAPAN IS STILL PRETTY MUCH A CLOSED COUNTRY. THE IDEA OF STAYING AT A SINGLE COMPANY YOUR WHOLE LIFE HASN'T DIED DOWN YET.


JUST BECAUSE SOMEONE STAYS AT ONE COMPANY HIS WHOLE LIFE DOESN'T AUTOMATICALLY MAKE HIM A GOOD EMPLOYEE. ACTUALLY, I'D SAY THAT IN MOST CASES THE **OPPOSITE** IS TRUE.
HUH?
I COMPLETELY DISAGREE.
PEOPLE ARE CREATURES OF GREED. THEY THINK ONLY OF EVIL, NOT GOOD. YOU THINK SOMEONE LIKE THAT COULD BE AN ASSET TO A COMPANY?!
IT'S YOUR REAL-LONG TERM EMPLOYEES THAT CAN START TO DRAG THE COMPANY DOWN, SLACKING OFF BEHIND THEIR BOSS'S BACK OR WRITING EVERY LITTLE THING OFF AS A COMPANY EXPENSE.
I'M GLAD YOU ASKED. AS IT TURNS OUT, I USED TO WORK PART TIME AT A SHIPPING COMPANY.
DID YOU HAVE A BAD EXPERIENCE OR SOMETHING?
YOU SURE ARE FIRED UP ALL OF A SUDDEN.
THIS SURE BRINGS BACK SOME LOUSY MEMORIES.
I REMEMBER THIS ONE GUY WHO WORKED THERE, A STUDENT. HE WAS A REAL BASTARD.
IT WAS SIMPLE WORK REALLY, UNLOADING AND STACKING FREIGHT.

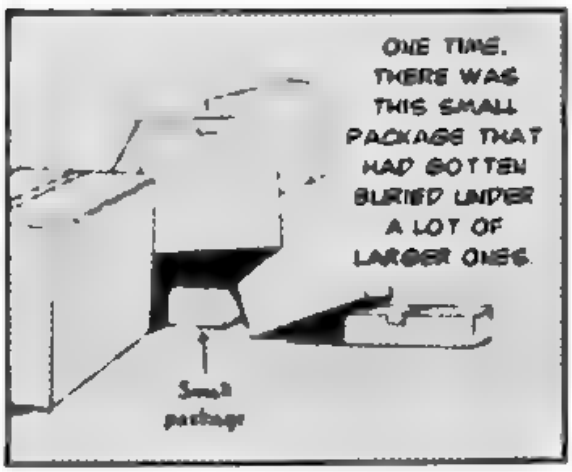
YOU KNOW HOW THERE'S LARGE FREIGHT AND SMALL FREIGHT, RIGHT?

WHAT MADE HIM SUCH A BASTARD?
HE WAS SUCH A BASTARD THAT I DON'T EVEN WANT TO REMEMBER HIM.

I WAS THERE FOR OVER SIX MONTHS AND NOT ONCE DID I SEE HIM PICK UP ANY LARGE FREIGHT.
MAN. WHAT A BAS-TARD!


THE ONLY THING THIS GUY WOULD CARRY WAS THE SMALL FREIGHT HE WOULD NEVER TOUCH THE LARGE STUFF

NOW GET THIS: HE GOES THROUGH THE TROUBLE OF PUSHING ALL THOSE OTHER BOXES ASIDE


ONE TIME. THERE WAS THIS SMALL PACKAGE THAT HAD GOTTEN BURIED UNDER A LOT OF LARGER ONES.
Small package

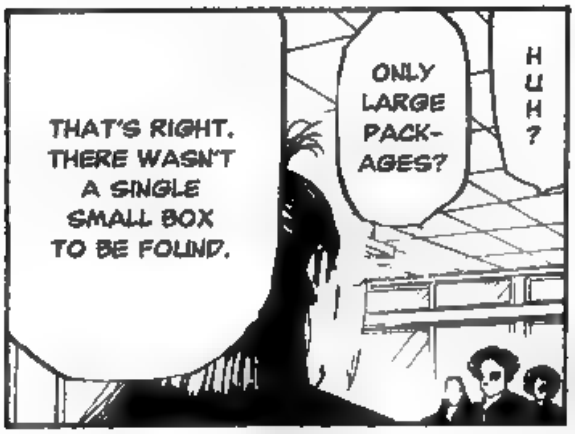
YEAH. IN A WAY. HE WAS ALMOST A PRO
THAT'S PRETTY HARD-CORE
WHAT THE HELL?!

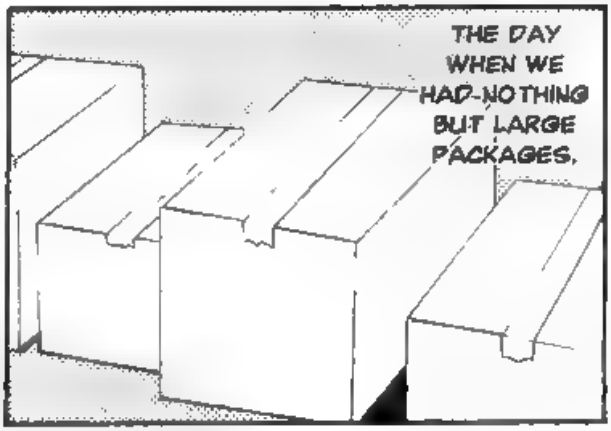
JUST SO HE COULD CARRY OFF THAT ONE SMALL ONE!

PLUS, FOR THREE YEARS THE GUY WAS NEVER LATE AND NEVER MISSED WORK. HE EVEN GOT SOME KIND OF AWARD FOR IT! SO EVEN THOUGH THE ONLY THING THE BASTARD EVER TOUCHED WAS THE SMALLER PACKAGES, HE GOT TREATED LIKE AN HONOR'S STUDENT OR SOMETHING, JUST BECAUSE HE'D BEEN WITH THE COMPANY FOR A WHILE.
THE THING IS, TECHNICALLY HE WASN'T SLACKING OFF, SO THE BOSS NEVER GOT ANGRY AT HIM.

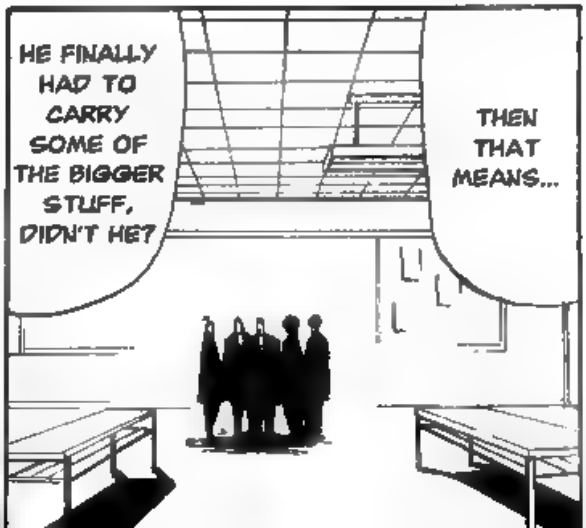
BUT THEN... THERE WAS THAT ONE DAY.

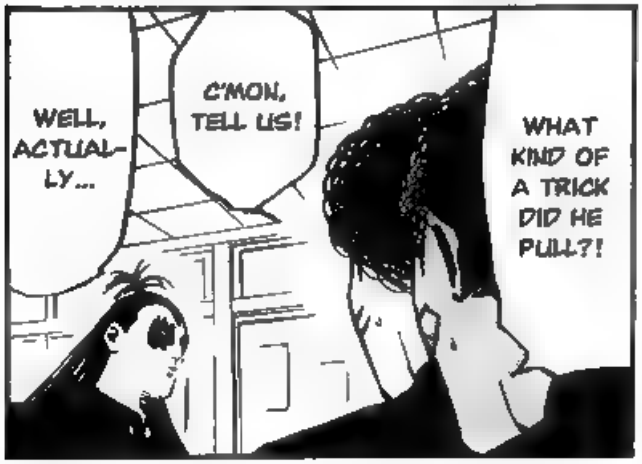
JEEZ. STILL, IT'S NOT GOOD TO BE LATE.
I, ON THE OTHER HAND, GOT CHEWED OUT JUST FOR BEING LATE EVERY NOW AND THEN.


THAT'S RIGHT. THERE WASN'T A SINGLE SMALL BOX TO BE FOUND.
ONLY LARGE PACK-AGES?
HUH?


THE DAY WHEN WE HAD-NOTHING BUT LARGE PACKAGES.

HUH?!
NOPE. AS USUAL, HE DIDN'T LAY A FINGER ON IT.

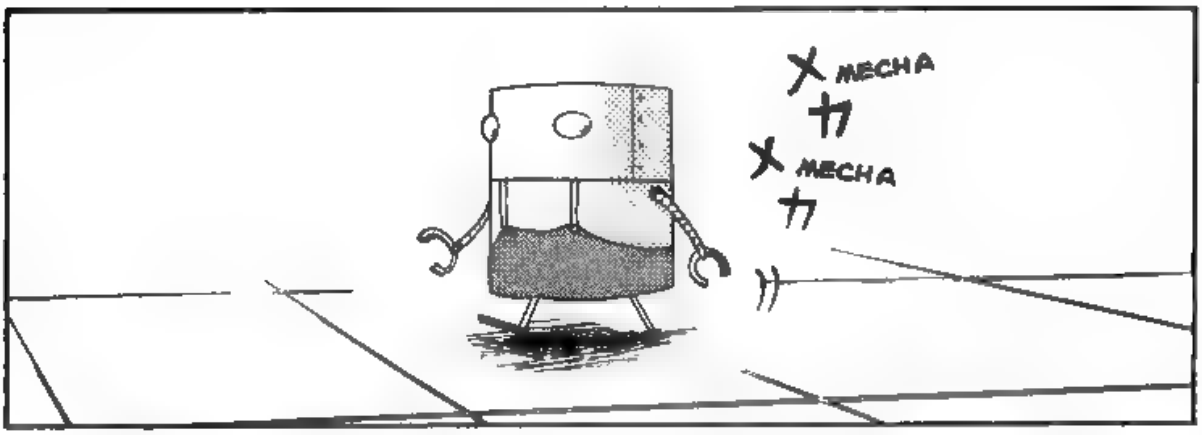

HE FINALLY HAD TO CARRY SOME OF THE BIGGER STUFF, DIDN'T HE?
THEN THAT MEANS...

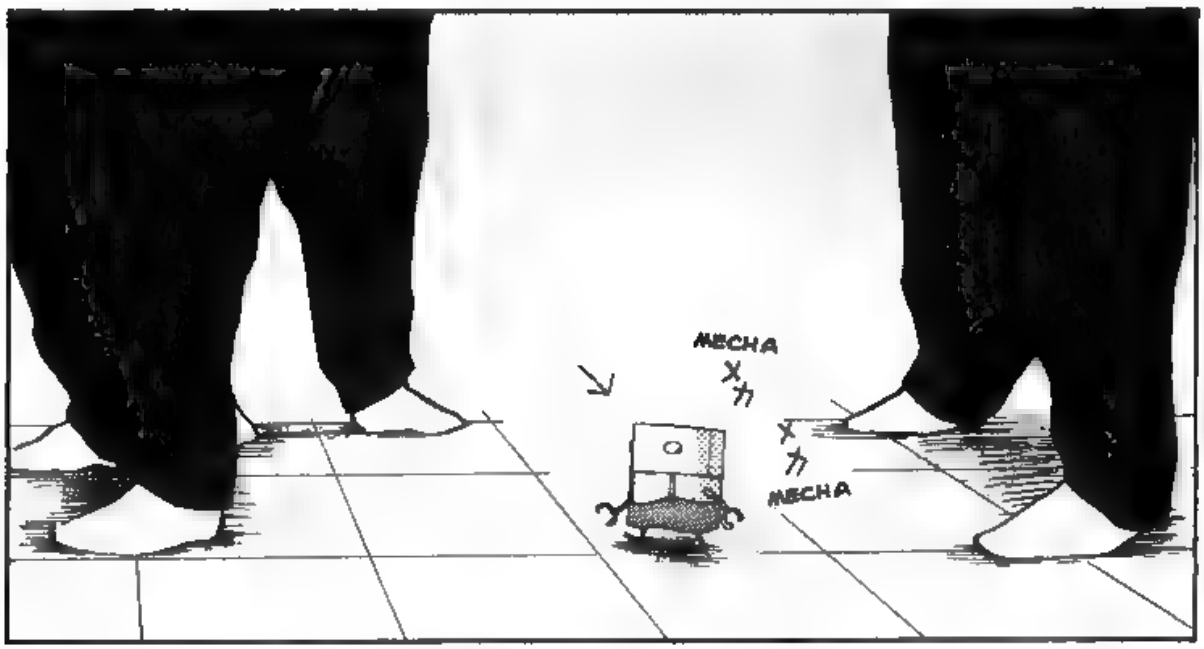


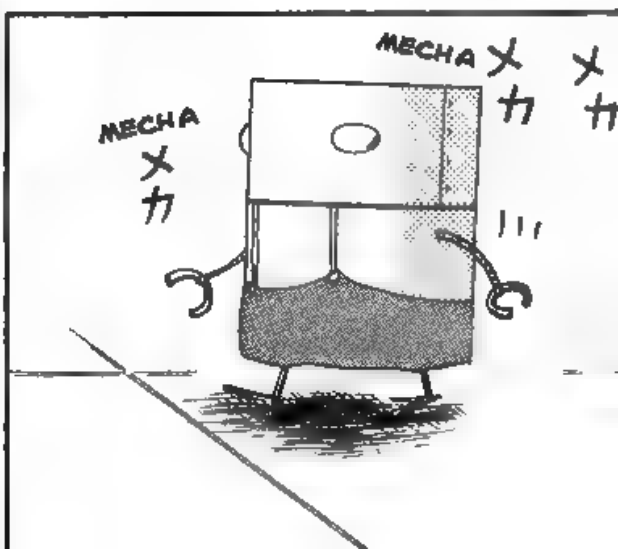
AT FIRST I WAS DELIGHTED. I THOUGHT HE WAS FINALLY GOING TO GET THE ASS-
IT TURNS OUT I WASN'T SO LUCKY. HE WAS EVEN MORE OF A BASTARD THAN I'D THOUGHT.

THESE GUYS ARE USELESS.

CHAPTER 148: **A HARD DAY'S MORNING**







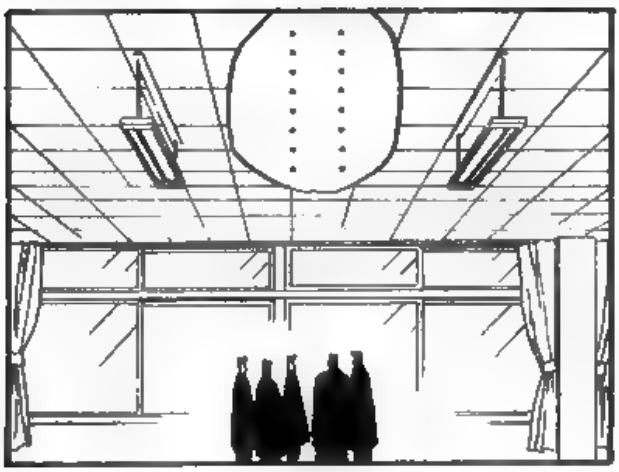
AAH!
SKRSH

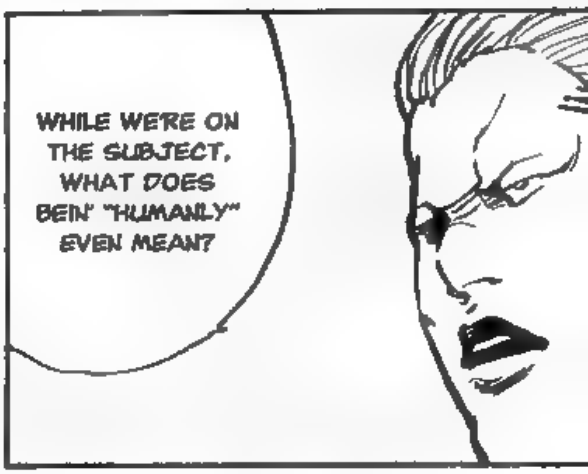
UH, I DON'T THINK HE HAS ANY KIND OF INTENTIONS.
WELL, THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO NOW. AND IT'S NOT AS IF HE DID IT WITH ILL INTENTIONS.
NOT AGAIN! DAMMIT, GORILLA! WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING!
SPKK
SPKK

I THINK HE SHOULD START LEARNIN' SOME OF THE RULES. YOU KNOW, LIKE HOW TO ACT A LITTLE MORE HUMAN.
STILL, THE GORILLA IS PRETTY MUCH ONE OF US.

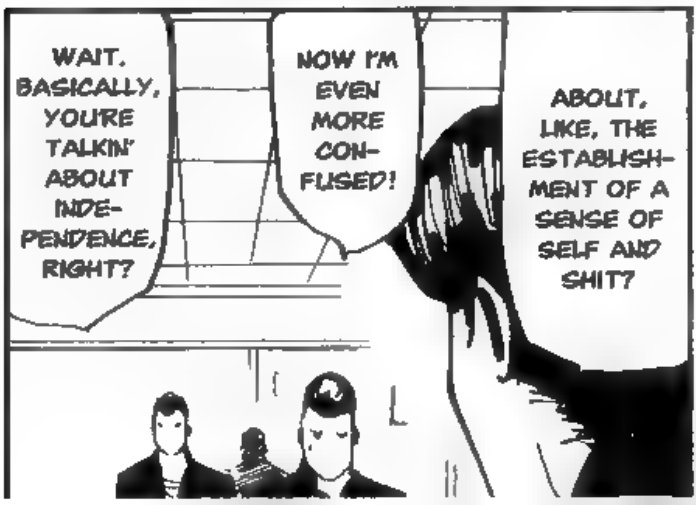
THAT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE A GOOD WAY TO TEACH HIM TO BE HUMAN.
SO I GUESS IT'S TIME TO BREAK OUT A WHIP AND A CHAIR OR SOMETHING, HUH?
YEAH, I SEE YOUR POINT.
TELL YA WHAT, WHY DON'T WE START OFF WITH YOUR MORE STANDARD APPROACH?
YEAH. NOT TO MENTION TEACHIN' HIM, LIKE, HUMANIS-TICALLY.
LOOK, YOU CAN TALK ABOUT TEACHING HIM ALL YOU WANT, BUT THE TRUTH IS, IT AIN'T GONNA BE EASY.
IF HE CAN PUT 'EM TOGETHER RIGHT...
WELL, WE'VE GOT THESE [redacted] BLOCKS [redacted]
LIKE WHAT?
THERE'S JUST ONE THING, THOUGH...
HEY, YEAH! THE OLD TRIED-AND-TRUE WAY'S GOTTA WORK!
HE'LL GET A BANANA.

OH, YEAH. I GUESS THAT'S THE WRONG WAY TO GO IF WE WANNA TEACH HIM TO BE MORE HUMANLY.
ISN'T THAT THE KIND OF TRAINING YOU'D USE ON A GORILLA? I MEAN, THERE'S NOTHIN' HUMAN ABOUT IT!



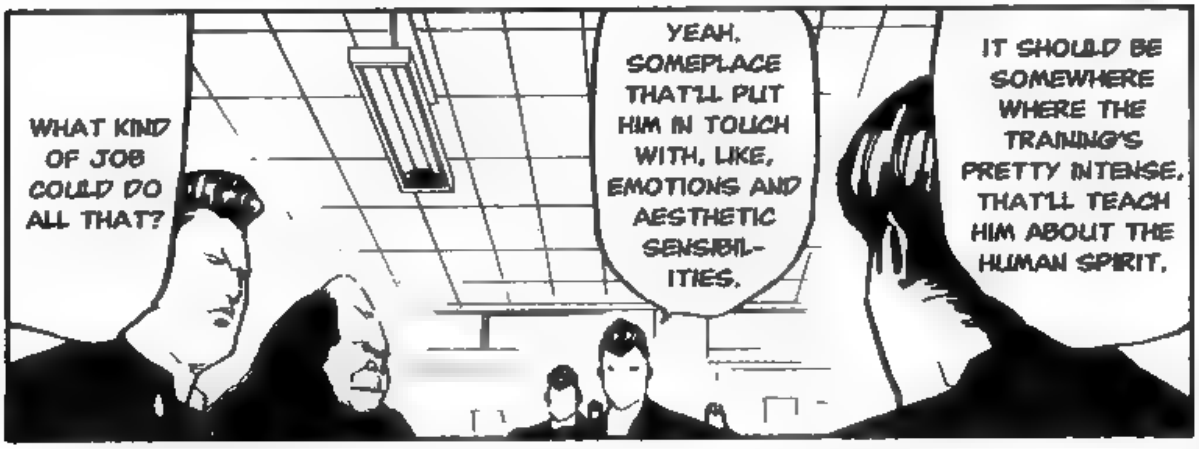

WHILE WE'RE ON THE SUBJECT, WHAT DOES BEIN' "HUMANLY" EVEN MEAN?

ISN'T THERE SOMEONE HERE WHO CAN GIVE US A QUICK DESCRIPTION OR SOMETHIN'?
DUDE, I DON'T THINK I'VE EVEN HEARD THAT WORD BEFORE
HUH. YOU KNOW, I'VE NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT IT.


WAIT. BASICALLY, YOU'RE TALKIN' ABOUT INDE-PENDENCE, RIGHT?
NOW I'M EVEN MORE CON-FUSED!
ABOUT, LIKE, THE ESTABLISH-MENT OF A SENSE OF SELF AND SHIT?

WELL, I AIN'T TOO GOOD WITH ALL THIS TECHNICAL MUMBO-JUMBO, BUT ISN'T BEIN' "HUMAN"...

BUT WHAT KIND OF JOB WOULD BE BEST FOR HIM?
I THINK YOU'RE ON TO SOMETHIN'. HE COULD LEARN INDEPENDENCE WHILE HE'S LEARNIN' ABOUT SOCIETY, TOO.
IF THAT'S THE CASE, WHY NOT MAKE HIM GET A PART-TIME JOB?


WHAT KIND OF JOB COULD DO ALL THAT?
YEAH. SOMEPLACE THAT'LL PUT HIM IN TOUCH WITH, LIKE, EMOTIONS AND AESTHETIC SENSIBILITIES.
IT SHOULD BE SOMEWHERE WHERE THE TRAINING'S PRETTY INTENSE. THAT'LL TEACH HIM ABOUT THE HUMAN SPIRIT.

IN A WAY, IT MIGHT EVEN TEACH HIM WHAT LIFE'S ALL ABOUT!
YES! AT A SUSHI PLACE, HE'D BE STARTIN' FROM SCRATCH AND BE PUT THROUGH ALL KINDS OF TRAINING!
THERE'S ONLY ONE PLACE: A SUSHI RESTAURANT.

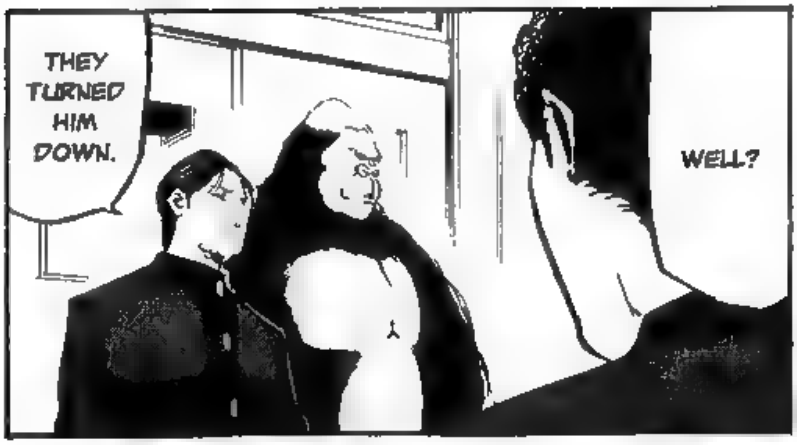
YOU GOT A POINT. I AIN'T NEVER SEEN ONE THAT HAS.
TO GET LOGICAL ABOUT THIS FOR A MINUTE... WOULD A SUSHI SHOP EVEN HIRE A GORILLA?
THERE'S JUST ONE THING.

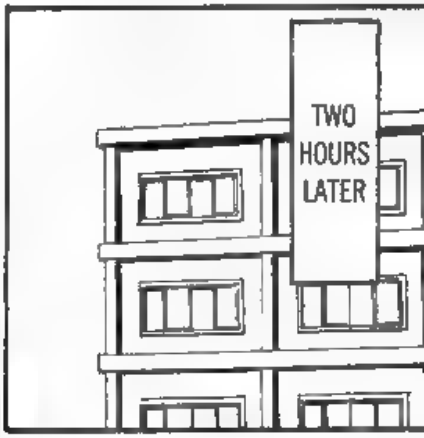
YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT!
IT'S A LONG SHOT, BUT I SAY WE TRY IT!

GIVING UP WITHOUT EVEN TRYING IS THE SIGN OF A STRAIGHT-UP **LOSER**! IS THAT THE KIND OF PEOPLE WE ARE?

VERY WELL.
KAMI-YAMA, WILL YA TAKE HIM?

SO IT'S SETTLED. NOW ALL WE NEED IS SOMEONE TO TAKE THE GORILLA BY SOME SUSHI SHOPS...

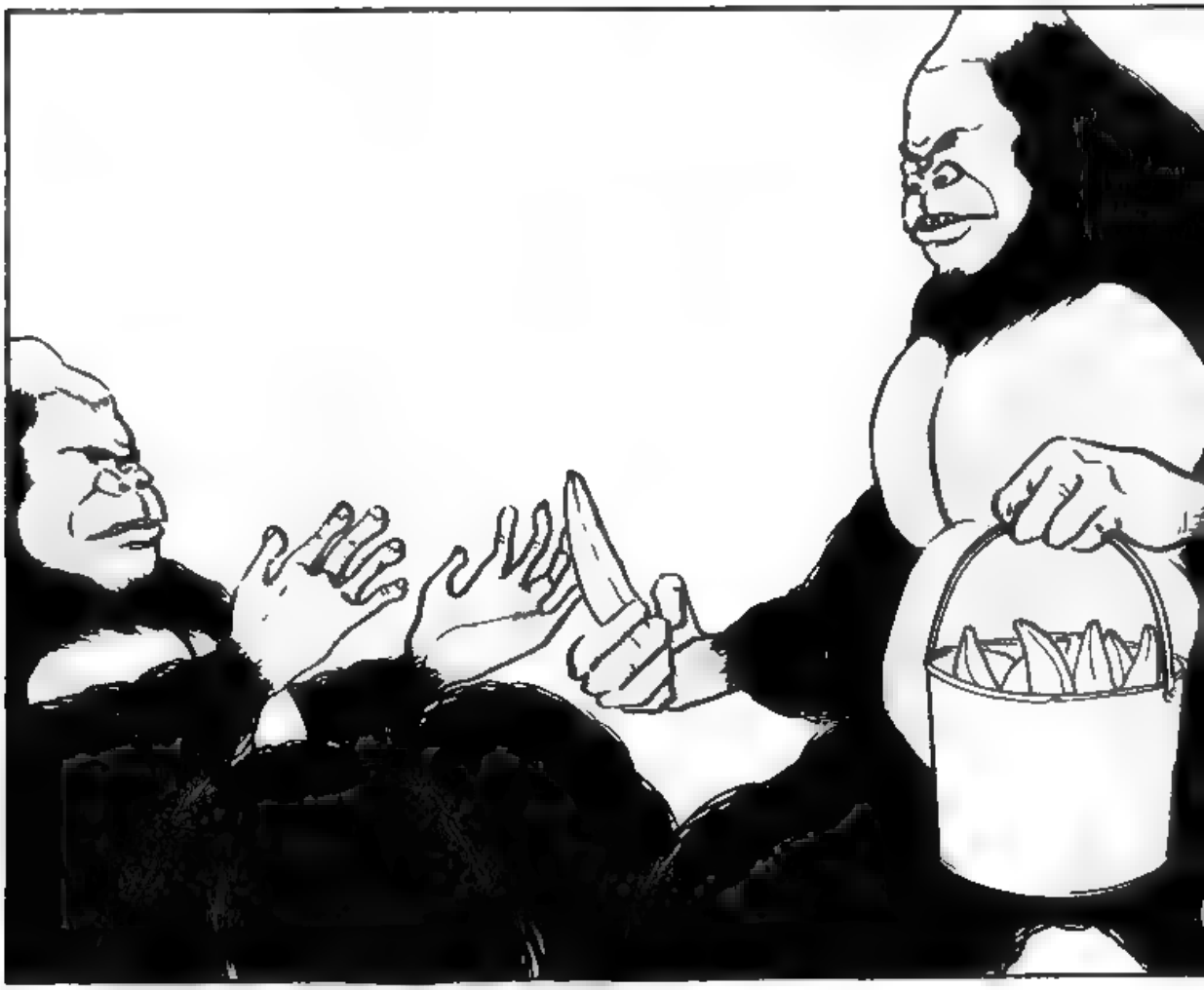

THEY TURNED HIM DOWN.
WELL?

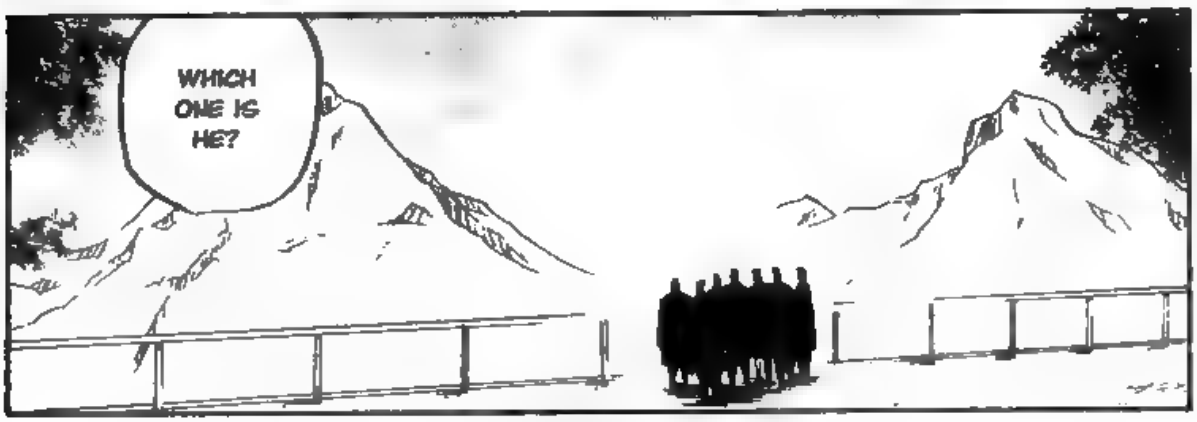

TWO HOURS LATER

HUH. THEN I GUESS OUR BEST BET IS GONNA BE THE ZOO.

I ALSO THINK THAT GOIN' FORWARD, WE SHOULD PROBLY KEEP MIND THAT THIS GUY'S A GORILLA.
I GUESS IT'S TOUGH TO JUST DROP BY A SUSHI SHOP AND GET A JOB, HUH?

THE THING IS, WE'RE TALKING ABOUT HAVING HIM **WORK** AT A ZOO. I'M NOT SURE HE'D "FIT RIGHT IN." IN FACT, WOULDN'T HE JUST GET TURNED AWAY?
HANG ON A SECOND.
YEAH, A GORILLA WOULD FIT RIGHT IN AT A ZOO.
ALRIGHT THEN! WE TAKE HIM TO THE ZOO!
WORKS FOR ME. BESIDES, A ZOO WOULD PROBABLY BE MORE FLEXIBLE THAN WORKIN' AT A SUSHI PLACE.
WELL, IF THAT HAPPENS...WHAT DO YOU SAY WE JUST DUMP HIS ASS THERE AND LEAVE?
ZOO
動物園
ONE WEEK LATER
YOU'RE RIGHT! THEY DID HIRE HIM AFTER ALL!
HEY, LOOK! HE'S WORKING!
I WONDER IF THE GORILLA'S BEEN WORKIN'.
LET'S SEE...





BETTER HOPE HE'S NOT THE ONE ON THE LEFT.

ENOUGH ALREADY! (MORE) HAPHAZARD CHARACTER INTRODUCTIONS!

TAKASHI KAMIYAMA

The protagonist of this manga. Kamiyama has seen a sharp drop in the number of his appearances, to the point where if I didn't keep mentioning this fact, it's entirely possible that both I and my editor would forget that he's supposed to be the main character. Kamiyama used to be an honor's student, but he's been exhibiting some rather ill-mannered behavior lately.

AKIRA MAEDA

Maeda has an extremely weak presence, and has been like that pretty much from the beginning. His mother appears in the manga far less than he does, yet she's achieved a degree of stardom among *Cromartie* fans.

SHINJIRO HAYASHIDA

It would be no exaggeration to call Hayashida the "ace pilot" of this manga. He is, of course, a Newtype. Things can get pretty crazy in this book, but by now readers have no doubt learned that if Hayashida's involved, it's to be expected.

FREDDIE

Cromartie High's mystery man. Even now, we're no closer to knowing whether Freddie is actually a student at Cromartie...or even a high-school student, for that matter. Lately, it seems like he's being treated more like a pet than anything else.

MASKED TAKENOUCHI

Recently, this character has been appearing a lot more than the real Takenouchi. He's such a nice guy that readers as well as your humble author are starting to forget why he even wears that mask. Masked Takenouchi is a lot more mature than the other characters (in terms of age).

ENOUGH ALREADY! (MORE) HAPHAZARD CHARACTER INTRODUCTIONS!

TAKESHI HOKUTO

Born into a wealthy family, Hokuto has a brilliant mind and a profound knowledge of the martial arts (or so he claims). He is also incredibly self-centered, even by Cromartie standards--that ego of his puts Hokuto right up at the top. But what's up with his hair?!

HOKUTO'S HENCHMAN

This poor fellow has gone so long without being able to say his name that it may seem yours truly is determined to take that knowledge to the grave. Most readers have probably lost interest in it by now.

SHINICHI MECHAZAWA

Mechazawa is an extremely hard-headed person, but not in the sense you're probably thinking. (Actually, he's not a person at all, is he?) Mechazawa was ranked the most popular *Cromartie* character in a poll a while back, but these days he hasn't been showing up too much. For some reason, he's become quite the fixture in a certain magazine aimed toward children.

GORILLA

Readers and editorial staff alike were shocked to see what a major role this unpredictable character has come to play. I still haven't given any thought as to which gorilla is which, though. In any case, a gorilla will be playing a large role in this volume--a dangerously large role.

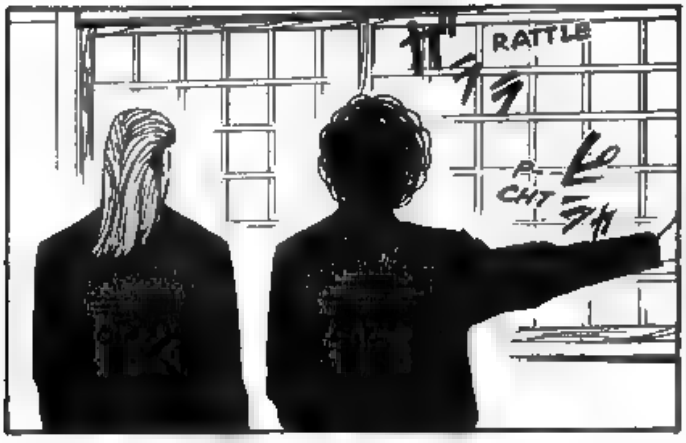
THE FOUR GREAT ONES

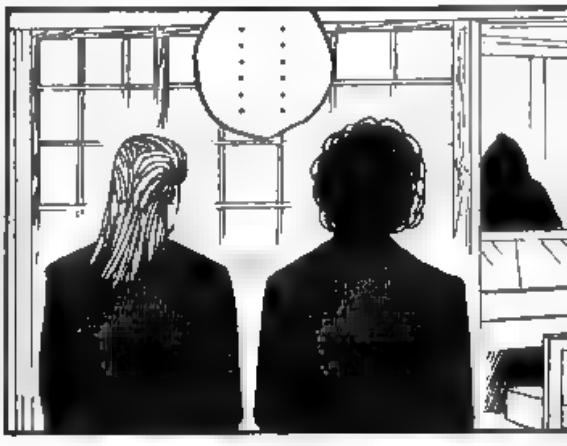
No one is more suited to blathering on about some topic or other than this dapper quintet of 2nd-year students. Their ability to hold conversations utterly devoid of meaning is unparalleled. Iga-chan, their wildly self-absorbed leader, is a hit with the readers.

CHAPTER 149: **WITH A SHOUT**

In a good mood because the joke he submitted to the radio was used on the air
YOU WANT TO GO GET SOMETHING TO EAT? IT'S ON ME.
I'M GETTIN' PRETTY HUNGRY, YAMAGUCHI.
NOBORU YAMAGUCHI
LEADER OF DESTRADE HIGH'S 1ST YEARS
JUN ISHIKAWA
DESTRADE 1ST YEAR

SERIOUSLY, GET WHATEVER YOU WANT. I'LL EVEN TAKE US OUT FOR SUSHI IF YOU LIKE.
Won some prize money for his submission
FOR REAL? YOU'RE THE BEST, MAN!

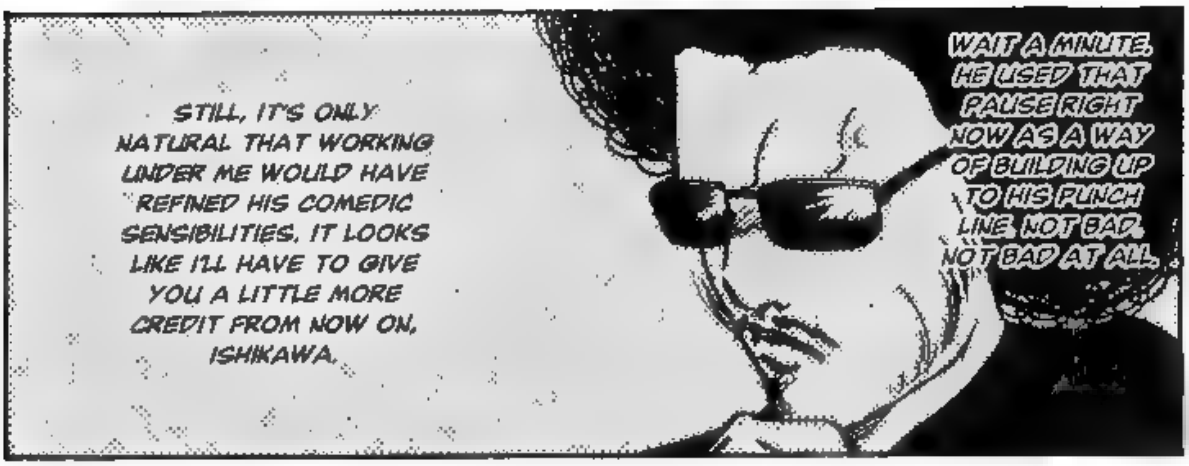

RATTLE
CHT



SUSHI
I, UH...I JUST WASN'T SURE IF THIS WAS REALLY A SUSHI SHOP.
WHAT'S THE MATTER?

RATTLE
ガラ
FINE
COME ON, LET'S HURRY UP AND GO IN. I'M STARVING!
SUSHI
OF COURSE IT IS! IT SAYS SO RIGHT THERE ON THE SIGN!
YEAH, THAT'S DEFINITELY THE SIGN FOR A SUSHI SHOP, BUT...
WHAT'RE YOU TALKIN' ABOUT? THEY'VE GOT THE CURTAINS HANGIN' OUT FRONT, DON'T THEY?
DO YOU THINK THEY'RE EVEN OPEN YET? I MEAN, MAYBE THEY'RE STILL GETTING READY.
'SCUSE ME! CAN YOU MAKE US SOME NIGIRI, PLEASE? WHATEVER THE DAILY SPECIAL IS.
OH, I SEE WHAT THIS IS. YOU'RE STARTIN' TO REGRET SAYING YOU'D PAY FOR ME, IS THAT IT? WELL FORGET IT! ONCE OUR BOSS YAMAGUCHI'S SAID SOMETHING, THERE'S NO TAKIN' IT BACK!
YEAH, THAT'S NICE AND FRESH. IT'S PRESSED TOGETHER PERFECTLY, TOO. NOT A THING WRONG WITH IT...
WHOA, KOHADA HERRING! FANCY!

TOOK YOU LONG ENOUGH!
HEY, THAT'S A FRICKIN' GORILLA!


STILL, IT'S ONLY NATURAL THAT WORKING UNDER ME WOULD HAVE REFINED HIS COMEDIC SENSIBILITIES. IT LOOKS LIKE I'LL HAVE TO GIVE YOU A LITTLE MORE CREDIT FROM NOW ON, ISHIKAWA.
WAIT A MINUTE. HE USED THAT PAUSE RIGHT NOW AS A WAY OF BUILDING UP TO HIS PUNCH LINE. NOT BAD. NOT BAD AT ALL.

HOW AM I SUP-POSED TO STAY CALM?! A FRIGGIN PRIMATE JUST MADE MY SUSHI! YECH!
CALM YOUR-SELF.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKIN' ABOUT, MAN?! THAT'S A GORILLA! WE GOTTA RUN FOR IT!
I SEE YOU'VE IMPROVED. WELL DONE.

ONE RARELY COMES ACROSS A SITUATION AS HILARIOUS AS A GORILLA IN A SUSHI SHOP. I THINK WE SHOULD TAKE THE TIME TO ENJOY THIS TO THE FULLEST.
THINK ABOUT THIS RATIONALLY, ISHIKAWA.
SEE, THIS IS THE KIND OF INTERESTING SHIT YOU CAN ONLY SEE WHEN YOU HANG OUT WITH ME! I'M TELLING YOU, THE GOD OF COMEDY HAS...
(REIGNS HIMSELF IN)
WELL, I GUESS YOU GOT A POINT. I MEAN, IT'S NOT JUST A GORILLA IN A SUSHI SHOP-- HE'S ACTUALLY MAKING THE SUSHI.
LISTEN, YOU COULD SEARCH THE WHOLE WORLD AND FIND ONLY ONE OR TWO RESTAURANTS LIKE THIS! IT'S INCREDIBLE!
Are you for real?
UH, I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT.
REASONS? FOR A GORILLA TO MAKE SUSHI?
I'M SURE HE'S GOT HIS REASONS.
STILL... WHAT DO FIGURE THAT GORILLA'S MAKIN' SUSHI FOR?
OH. YEAH, I CAN SEE THAT.
Stop talking nonsense!
OF COURSE! WHAT ARE YOU, A MORON?! A GORILLA WOULDN'T JUST WALK INTO A RESTAURANT AND START MAKING SUSHI UNLESS HE HAD A GOOD REASON!

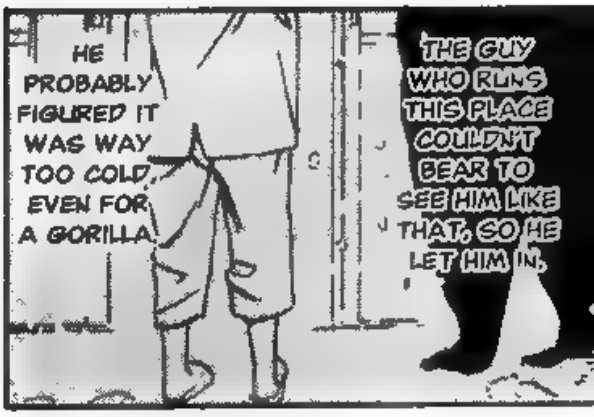
WHAT?! YOU HAVE?
I'VE ALREADY FIGURED IT OUT.

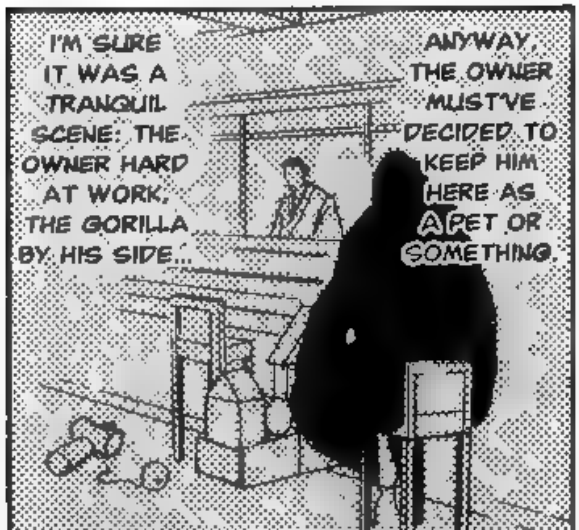
STILL, I CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT KIND OF REASON HE'D HAVE TO START MAKIN' SUSHI.

I'LL BET THAT ON THAT VERY DAY, THE GORILLA WAS STANDING OUTSIDE THIS SHOP.
YEAH. THERE WAS SNOW AND SLEET AND ALL THAT STUFF.

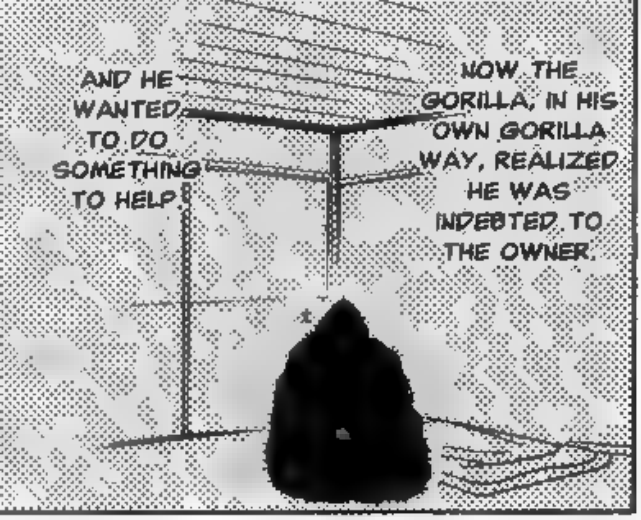
YOU REMEMBER THE DAY IT SNOWED REALLY HARD? IT WAS SOMETIME LAST WEEK.

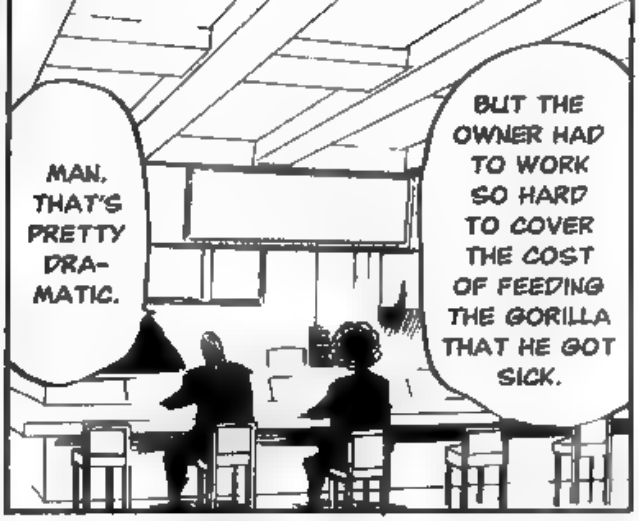
HOLD ON A SECOND.


HE PROBABLY FIGURED IT WAS WAY TOO COLD, EVEN FOR A GORILLA.
THE GUY WHO RUNS THIS PLACE COULDN'T BEAR TO SEE HIM LIKE THAT, SO HE LET HIM IN.

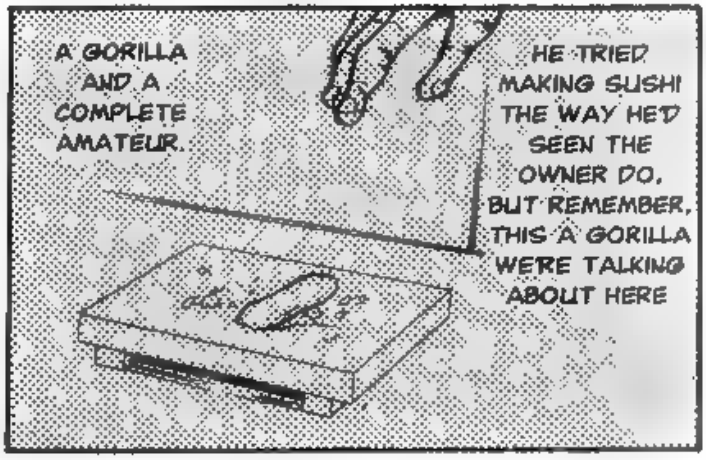

I'M SURE IT WAS A TRANQUIL SCENE: THE OWNER HARD AT WORK, THE GORILLA BY HIS SIDE...
ANYWAY, THE OWNER MUST'VE DECIDED TO KEEP HIM HERE AS A PET OR SOMETHING.

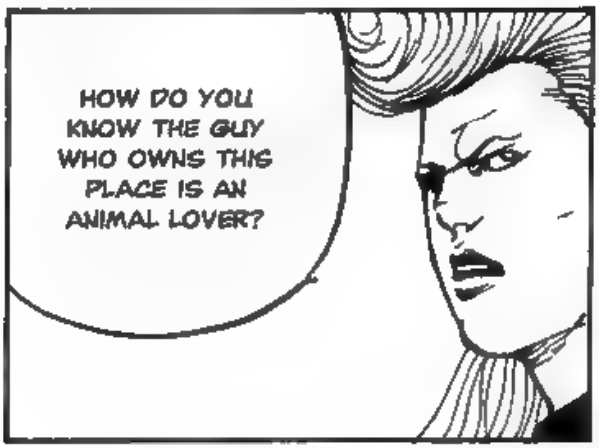
HOW [redacted] I KNOW, JACKASS? AND WHO CARES?!
WHY WAS THE GORILLA STANDIN' OUTSIDE?

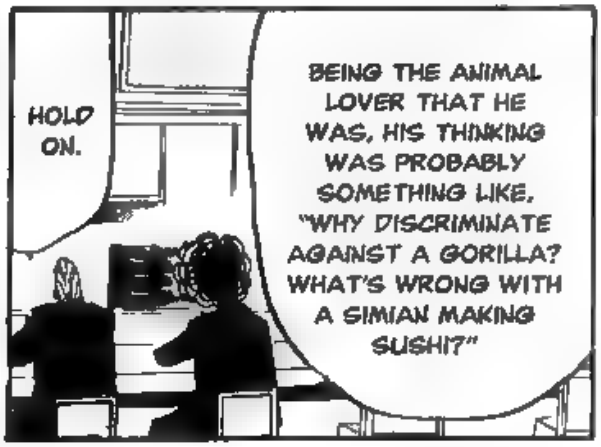

AND HE WANTED TO DO SOMETHING TO HELP.
NOW THE GORILLA, IN HIS OWN GORILLA WAY, REALIZED HE WAS INDEBTED TO THE OWNER.


MAN, THAT'S PRETTY DRA-MATIC.
BUT THE OWNER HAD TO WORK SO HARD TO COVER THE COST OF FEEDING THE GORILLA THAT HE GOT SICK.

STILL, THE OWNER TOOK THAT PIECE OF CRUDELY MADE SUSHI AND STUFFED IT INTO HIS MOUTH LIKE IT WAS A FINE MORSEL.


A GORILLA AND A COMPLETE AMATEUR.
HE TRIED MAKING SUSHI THE WAY HE'D SEEN THE OWNER DO. BUT REMEMBER, THIS A GORILLA WE'RE TALKING ABOUT HERE


HOW DO YOU KNOW THE GUY WHO OWNS THIS PLACE IS AN ANIMAL LOVER?


HOLD ON.
BEING THE ANIMAL LOVER THAT HE WAS, HIS THINKING WAS PROBABLY SOMETHING LIKE, "WHY DISCRIMINATE AGAINST A GORILLA? WHAT'S WRONG WITH A SIMIAN MAKING SUSHI?"

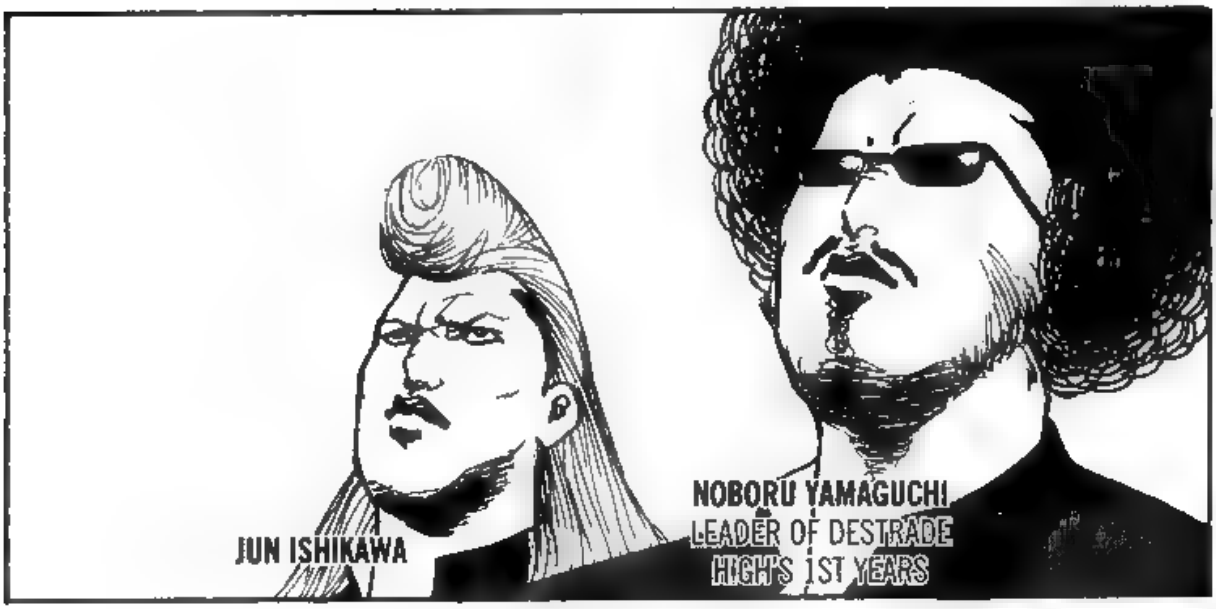
YEAH, THAT'S TRUE. SORRY FOR INTERRUPTING.
WHY THE HELL WOULD HE LET A GORILLA INTO HIS SHOP?!

LISTEN, IF HE DIDN'T LOVE ANIMALS...

OH, LOOK. THERE'S THE OWNER NOW.
RATTLE
YOU MEAN IT JUST WANDERED IN HERE ON ITS OWN?!
WHAT THE HECK?! THERE'S A GORILLA BEHIND THE COUNTER!
YEAH, THAT'S WHAT I FIGURED.

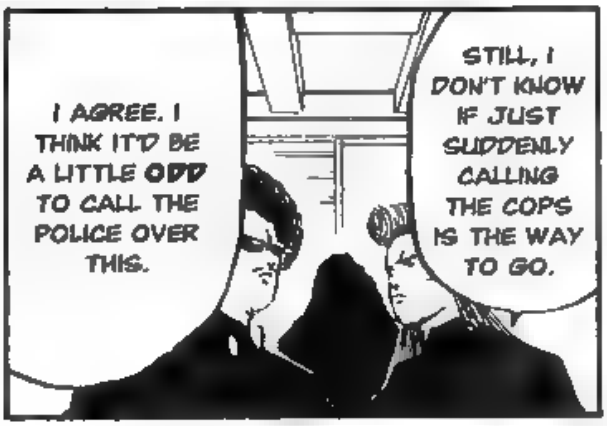
NOW OPEN: GORILLA SUSHI.

CHAPTER 150: **CAN'T STAND LOSING YOU**



I GUESS SO...
WE HAVE TO CALL THE COPS!

LISTEN UP, POPS.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN "ODD"?!


I AGREE. I THINK IT'D BE A LITTLE ODD TO CALL THE POLICE OVER THIS.
STILL, I DON'T KNOW IF JUST SUDDENLY CALLING THE COPS IS THE WAY TO GO.

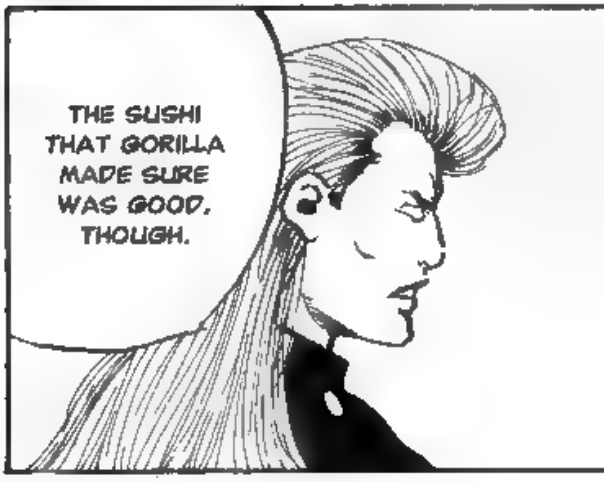
RIGHT.
I'D CALL THE COPS.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF A BURGLAR CAME INTO THE RESTAURANT?

EX-ACTLY.
I'D CALL THE FIRE DEPART-MENT.
AND WHAT IF THE SHOP CAUGHT ON FIRE? WHAT WOULD YOU DO THEN?
A GORILLA... IN MY SHOP.
NOW WHAT DO YOU DO IF A GORILLA GETS INTO YOUR SHOP?
I NEVER HEARD OF A GORILLA GOIN' INTO SOMEBODY'S SHOP, PERIOD!
RIGHT? I HAVEN'T HEARD OF TOO MANY PEOPLE CALLING THE POLICE BECAUSE A GORILLA GOT INTO THEIR SHOP.
WHEN YOU PUT IT LIKE THAT, I GET THE FEELING IT'S NOT THE COPS I SHOULD BE CALLING.
YOU TWO NEED TO LEAVE RIGHT NOW. THIS IS JUST BAD FOR BUSINESS!
ENOUGH! I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS!
WAIT. SO WHO SHOULD WE CALL THEN?

I'VE WASTED ENOUGH TIME ON YOU AS IT IS. NOW BEAT IT!
YOU THINK?
LET'S GO. THERE'S NO POINT IN GETTIN' INVOLVED IN THIS.

WHAT?!


THE SUSHI THAT GORILLA MADE SURE WAS GOOD, THOUGH.

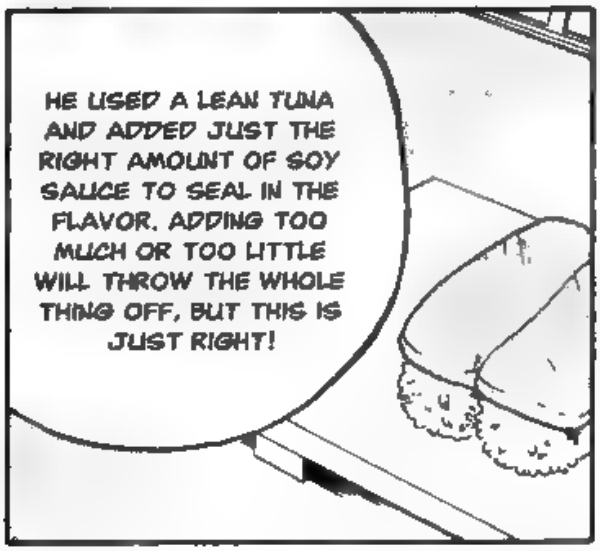
TAKE IT EASY THERE, POPS.
BULL! GO AHEAD, GET IT TO MAKE SOMETHING! I'LL BE THE FRICKIN' JUDGE!

WELL, I'M NO EXPERT OR NOTHIN', BUT YEAH, IT WAS GOOD.
DID YOU SAY THAT GORILLA'S SUSHI WAS GOOD?!

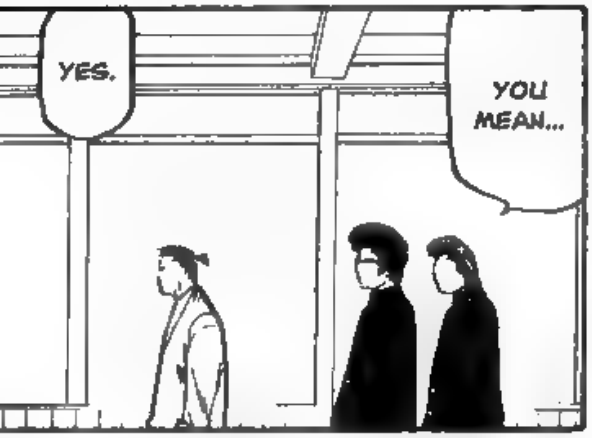
CAN YOU DO IT?

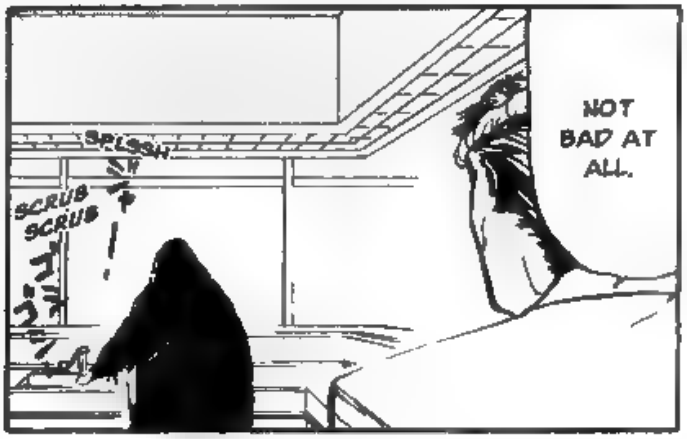
HMPH! A GORILLA MAKING SUSHI! I'VE NEVER HEARD SUCH...

SWP


HE USED A LEAN TUNA AND ADDED JUST THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF SOY SAUCE TO SEAL IN THE FLAVOR. ADDING TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE WILL THROW THE WHOLE THING OFF, BUT THIS IS JUST RIGHT!

IT'S PERFECTLY FORMED, IT MELTS IN YOUR MOUTH... THIS ISN'T THE SUSHI OF AN AMATEUR!
WHAT?


YES.
YOU MEAN...

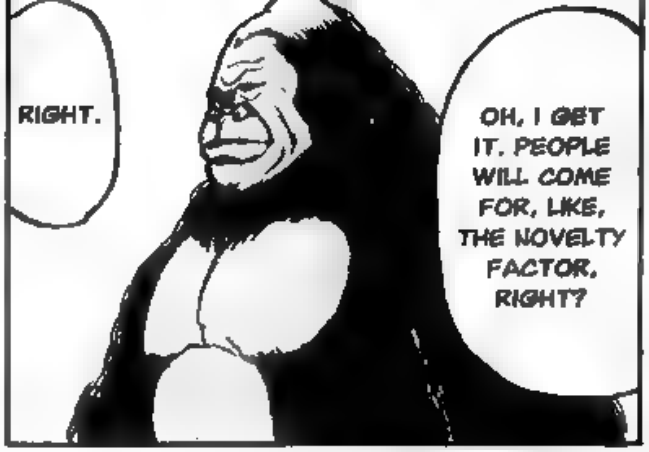

SPLOSH
SCRUB SCRUB
NOT BAD AT ALL.

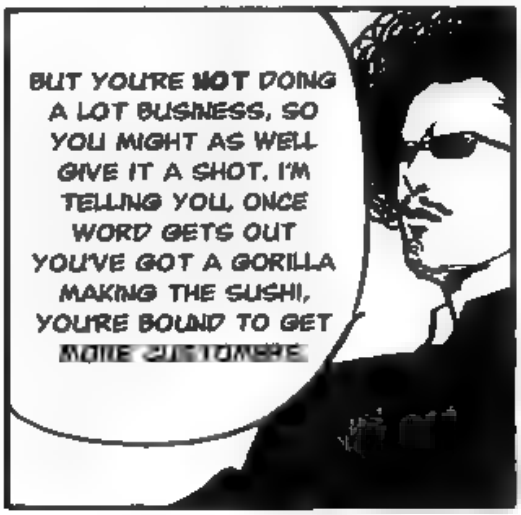
YOU'RE GONNA HIRE THAT GORILLA?!

IF I TOOK HIM UNDER MY WING, IN A FEW YEARS HE COULD BECOME A FIRST-RATE SUSHI CHEF.

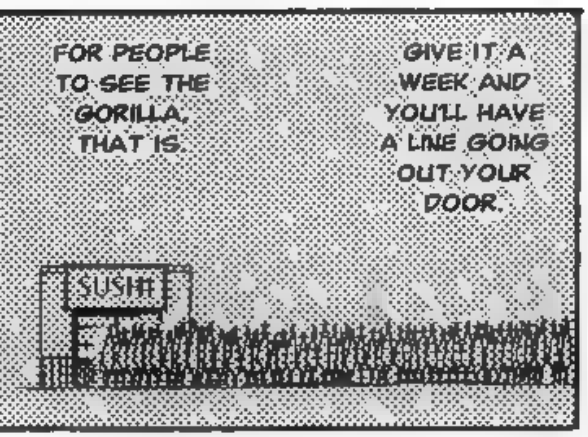
HOW OFTEN DO YOU SEE A GORILLA WHO'S GOT SO MUCH AMBITION? WHAT'S MORE, HE'S GOT **TALENT**! IT MAKES PERFECT SENSE TO HIRE HIM.
WHY THE HECK NOT?
NO, I... I JUST CAN'T.
SUSHI HAS GOTTA BE MADE BY AN ORDINARY HUMAN BEING. I'M SORRY, BUT IF I HAD A GORILLA DOING IT, I'D LOSE ALL MY CUSTOMERS.
LOOK KID, I'M IN THE CUSTOMER-SERVICE BUSINESS, AND MY WORK INVOLVES THE HANDLING OF FOOD.
I SAID YOU'VE GOT IT BACKWARDS. YOU WOULDN'T LOSE CUSTOMERS--HAVING THAT GORILLA WOULD GET YOU **MORE** OF THEM!
WHAT?
YOU'VE GOT IT BACK-WARDS.
LET'S SAY YOU'VE GOT THIS OLD DUDE HERE MAKING THE SUSHI. THAT MAKES THIS JUST AN ORDINARY SUSHI SHOP, ONE OF THE COUNTLESS OTHERS WE'VE GOT ALL OVER JAPAN.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, YAMA-GUCHI?
MORE... BECAUSE OF THE GORILLA?

AND THERE'S ONE MORE THING. YOU'LL PARDON ME FOR ASKIN' THIS, BUT YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY RAKING IN THE BUCKS WITH THIS RESTAURANT, ARE YOU?


RIGHT.
OH, I GET IT. PEOPLE WILL COME FOR, LIKE, THE NOVELTY FACTOR, RIGHT?


BUT YOU'RE **NOT** DOING A LOT BUSINESS, SO YOU MIGHT AS WELL GIVE IT A SHOT. I'M TELLING YOU, ONCE WORD GETS OUT YOU'VE GOT A GORILLA MAKING THE SUSHI, YOU'RE BOUND TO GET MORE CUSTOMERS.

BECAUSE IF YOU WERE DOING A LOT OF BUSINESS, SOMEONE WOULD'VE NOTICED THE SECOND A FRICKIN' GORILLA CAME INTO THE RESTAURANT.
YOU'RE A CHEEKY BASTARD, AIN'T YA?! THESE ARE SOME TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES, SO... HEY! HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT?


FOR PEOPLE TO SEE THE GORILLA, THAT IS.
GIVE IT A WEEK AND YOU'LL HAVE A LINE GOING OUT YOUR DOOR.
SUSHI

I'M SURE OF IT. TRUST ME.
YOU THINK?

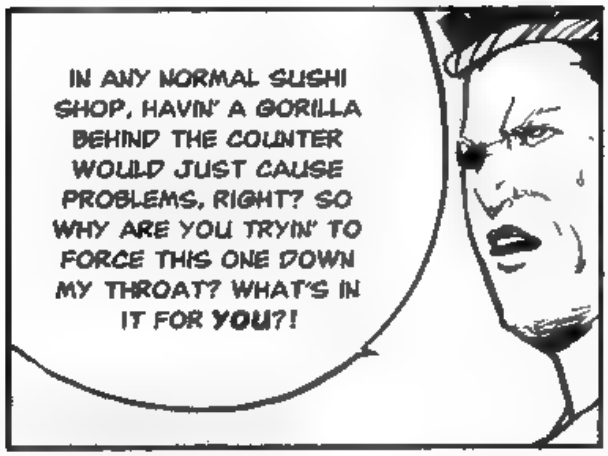
NOW YOU'RE TALKIN'!
OK, I'LL TRY IT.

"ALL GORILLAS." HAS A NICE RING TO IT.

CHAPTER 151: **FREE AS A BIRD**

HMM.
GORILLA SUSHI
CLOSED
I'LL TELL YA WE WENT WRONG— BY DECIDING TO TRUST SOME STUPID GORILLA!
I WONDER WHERE WE WENT WRONG.
IF YOU'VE GOT SOME GUY WHO'S ALWAYS SLACKIN' OFF ON THE JOB, IT MAKES SENSE TO YELL "GET TO WORK ALREADY!" OR SOMETHIN' AT HIM, RIGHT?
HUH?
YOU KNOW WHAT I THINK, POPS? I THINK YOU'RE BEIN' A LITTLE TOO COLD.

GET REAL, WOULD YOU?!
GOOD POINT.
BUT ISN'T IT KINDA UNREASONABLE TO SAY A GUY'S NO GOOD JUST 'CUZ HE'S A GORILLA?


IN ANY NORMAL SUSHI SHOP, HAVIN' A GORILLA BEHIND THE COUNTER WOULD JUST CAUSE PROBLEMS, RIGHT? SO WHY ARE YOU TRYIN' TO FORCE THIS ONE DOWN MY THROAT? WHAT'S IN IT FOR **YOU**?!

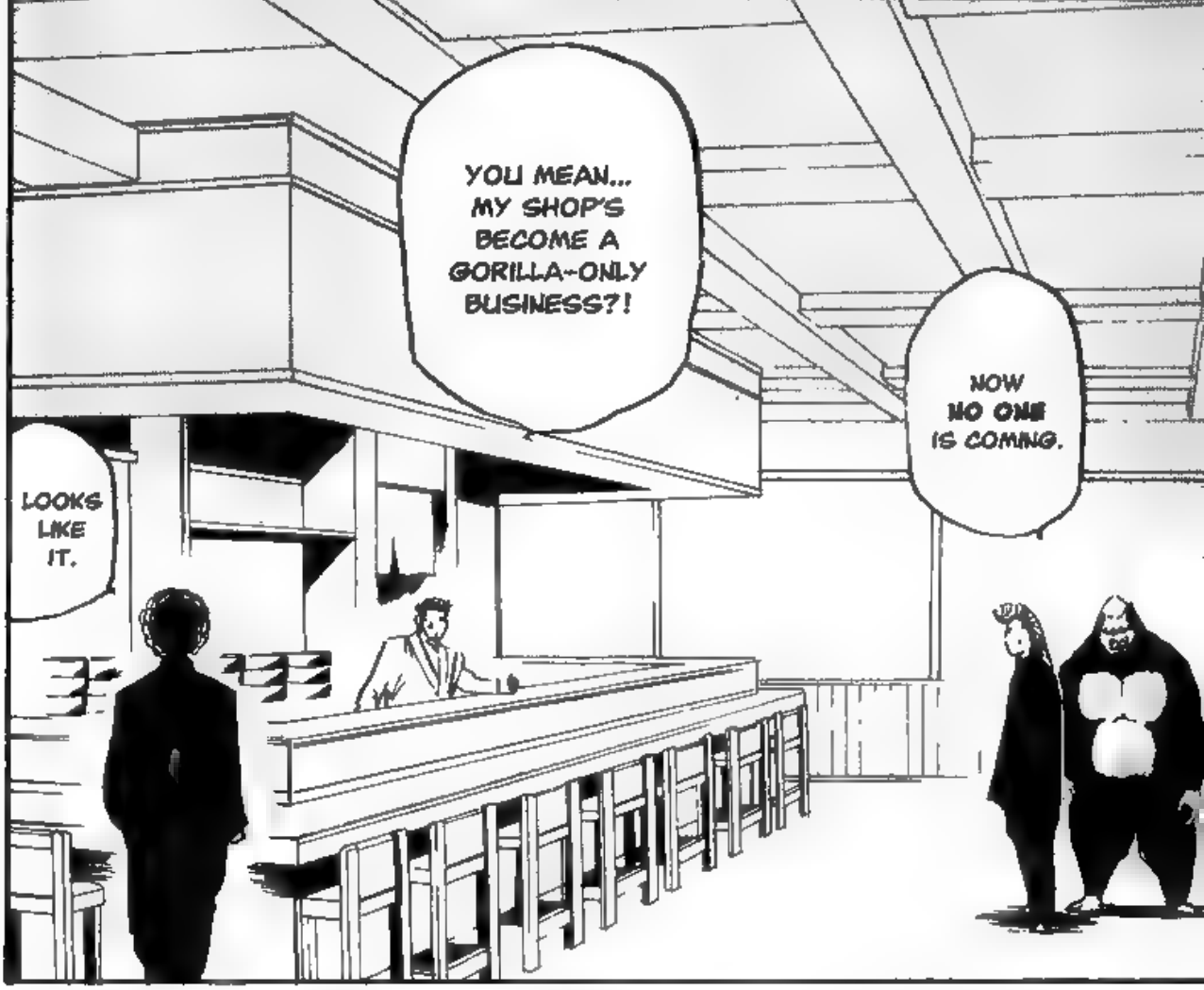
NOW WAIT A MINUTE!
NO MATTER HOW HARD A GORILLA WORKS, HE'S ONLY GONNA BE A GORILLA. NO MORE, NO LESS.

DON'T TELL ME... ARE YOU GUYS SO BORED THAT YOU'RE JUST HERE LOOKIN' FOR A COUPLE CHEAP LAUGHS?

HOLD ON.
WHOA THERE. TAKE IT EASY, WILL YA?

WAS I RIGHT? DAMMIT, WAS I RIGHT?!
PUTTING THAT ASIDE FOR NOW...

CUT THAT OUT!
RATTLE
RATTLE
HE'S GETTIN' READY TO START COOKING!
HM?
HEY, LOOK!
I'VE GOT IT. BASICALLY, YOU DON'T WANT ANY GORILLAS COMING HERE, RIGHT?
YEAH, WELL, GET AN APE TO MAKE SUSHI, YOU'RE GONNA GET APE CUSTOMERS.
HE'S ALREADY FOOLED ME ONCE BEFORE. THE ONLY "CUSTOMERS" HE BROUGHT IN WERE ALL GORILLAS!
NO GORILLAS ALLOWED.
-M@MT.
THEN IT'S SIMPLE.
THAT'S RIGHT.
GORILLA SUS
OPEN
NO GORILLAS ALLOWER.
-MMT.
HEY, YEAH! THAT'LL GET THE POINT ACROSS!
JUST HANG THIS UP.
NO GORILLAS ALLOWED.
-M@MT.


YOU MEAN... MY SHOP'S BECOME A GORILLA-ONLY BUSINESS?!
NOW NO ONE IS COMING.
LOOKS LIKE IT.

WE'LL JUST HAVE TO TAKE HIM BACK TO WHEREVER HE WAS BEFORE.

I GUESS WE'RE OUT OF OPTIONS.
I'M READY TO CALL IT QUITS.
I KNEW IT WAS A BAD IDEA TO KEEP HIM HERE!

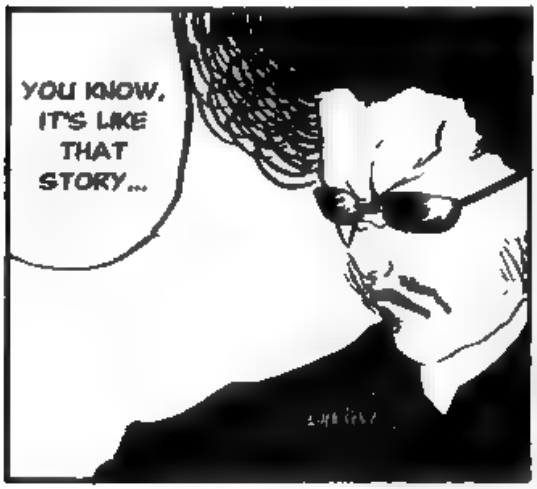
HEY, LOOK! HE'S LEAVIN'!
DETECTED

TWITCH

WHY DOESN'T HE JUST FRICKIN' LEAVE?!
HUH. IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S GONNA HOLE HIMSELF UP IN THAT ROOM.
P-CHT
WHAT?
I CAN HEAR HIM DOIN' SOME-THING IN THERE.
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
HM?
SSH
WAIT. WE WOULDN'T WANT TO UPSET HIM.
ENOUGH OF THIS! LET'S JUST OPEN IT!

WHAT WAS THAT JUST NOW? WAS HE TRYING TO TELL US NOT TO GO IN? THAT HE WOULDN'T BE COMING OUT? WHAT?!

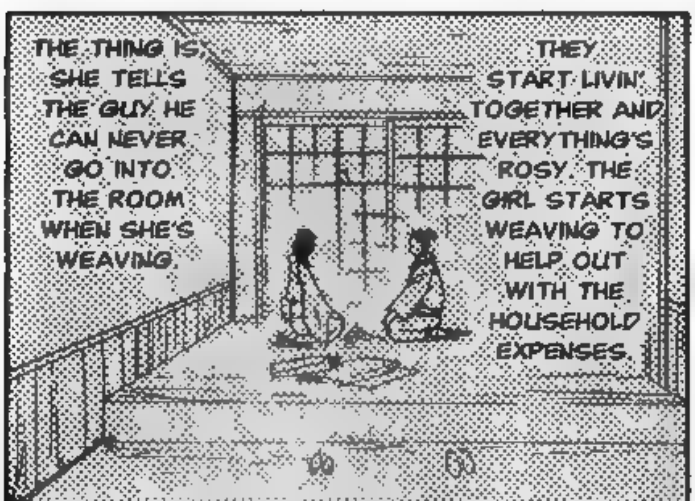
P-CHT
バタン

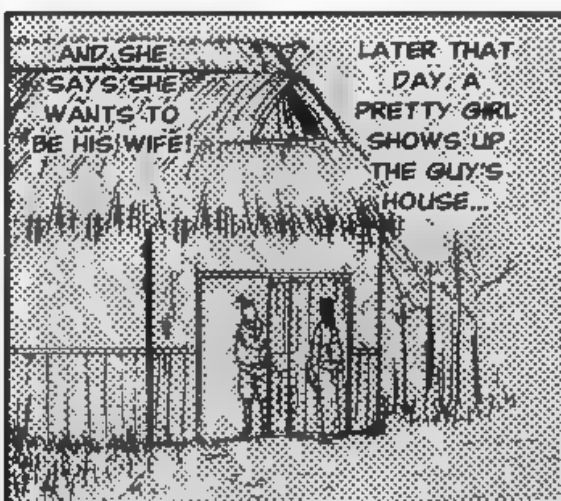

YOU KNOW, IT'S LIKE THAT STORY...

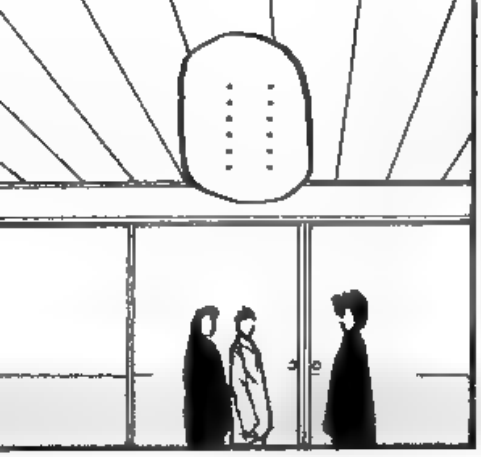
WHAT?
HOLD ON. I'VE HEARD OF SOMETHING LIKE THIS BEFORE.

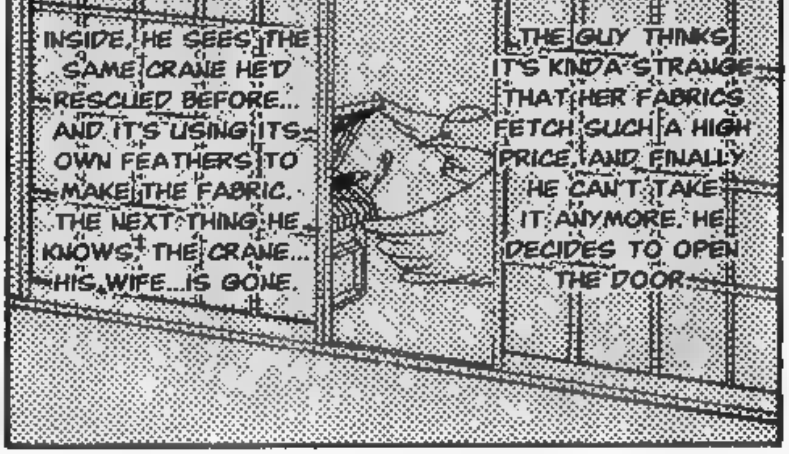
ONCE UPON A TIME, THIS GUY HELPED OUT A CRANE THAT HAD GOTTEN CAUGHT IN A TRAP.

HUH?!
YEAH.
OH, "THE GRATEFUL CRANE"?


THE THING IS, SHE TELLS THE GUY HE CAN NEVER GO INTO THE ROOM WHEN SHE'S WEAVING.
THEY START LIVIN' TOGETHER AND EVERYTHING'S ROSY. THE GIRL STARTS WEAVING TO HELP OUT WITH THE HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES.

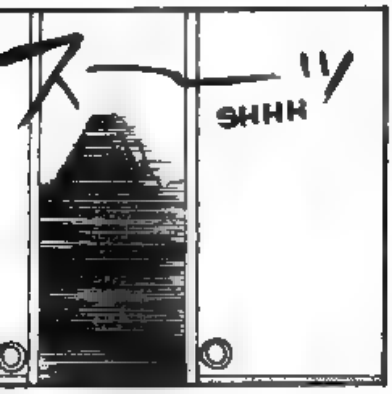

AND SHE SAYS SHE WANTS TO BE HIS WIFE!
LATER THAT DAY, A PRETTY GIRL SHOWS UP THE GUY'S HOUSE...




INSIDE, HE SEES THE SAME CRANE HE'D RESCUED BEFORE... AND IT'S USING ITS OWN FEATHERS TO MAKE THE FABRIC. THE NEXT THING HE KNOWS, THE CRANE... HIS WIFE...IS GONE.
THE GUY THINKS IT'S KINDA STRANGE THAT HER FABRICS FETCH SUCH A HIGH PRICE, AND FINALLY HE CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE. HE DECIDES TO OPEN THE DOOR.

WHY DON'T YOU SHUT IT ALREADY?! NO SELF-RESPECTING MAN SHOULD BE SPLITTIN' HAIRS LIKE THAT!
THAT THING'S BEEN A GORILLA FROM THE START, RIGHT?

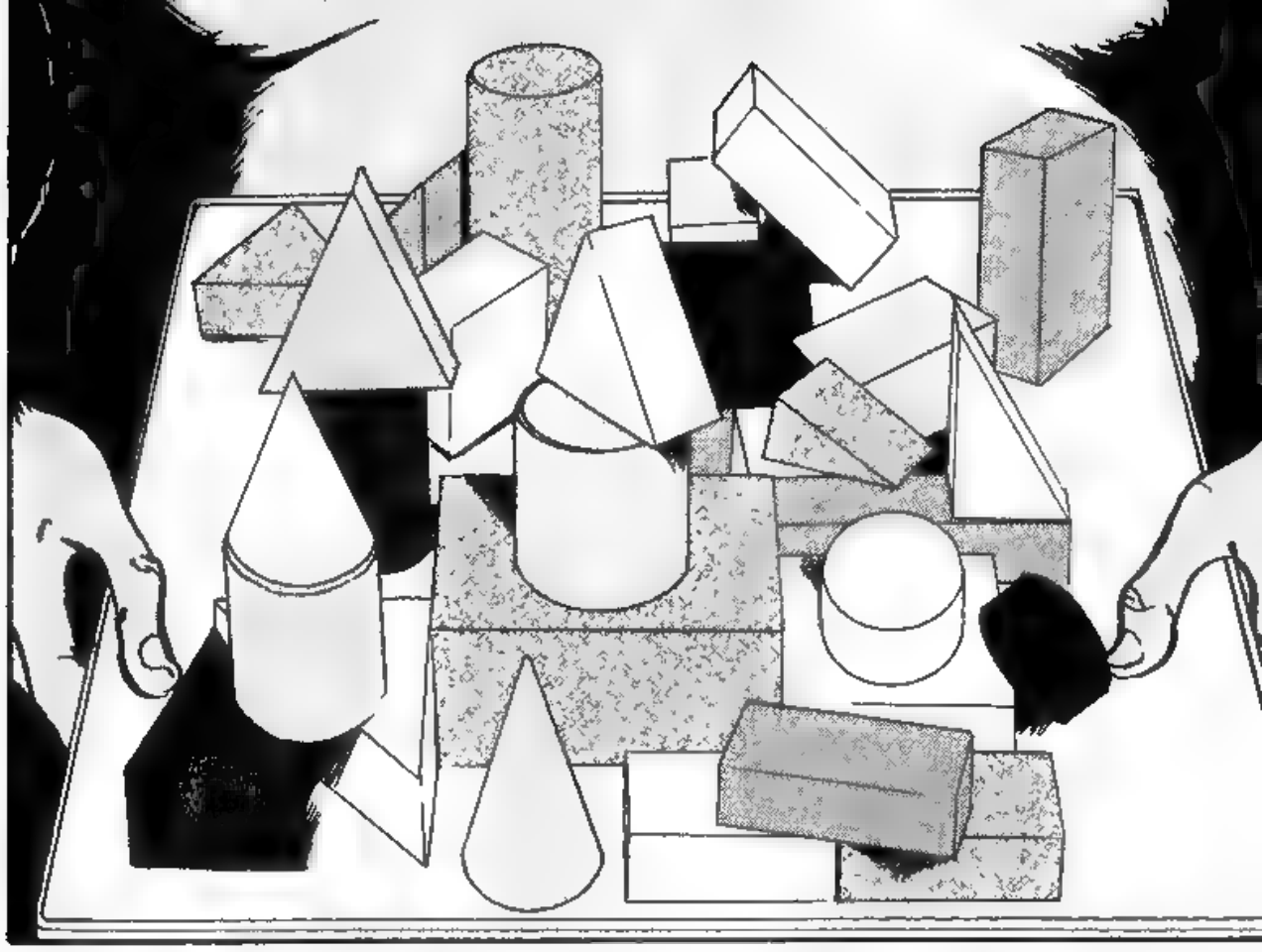
YOU DO REALIZE...

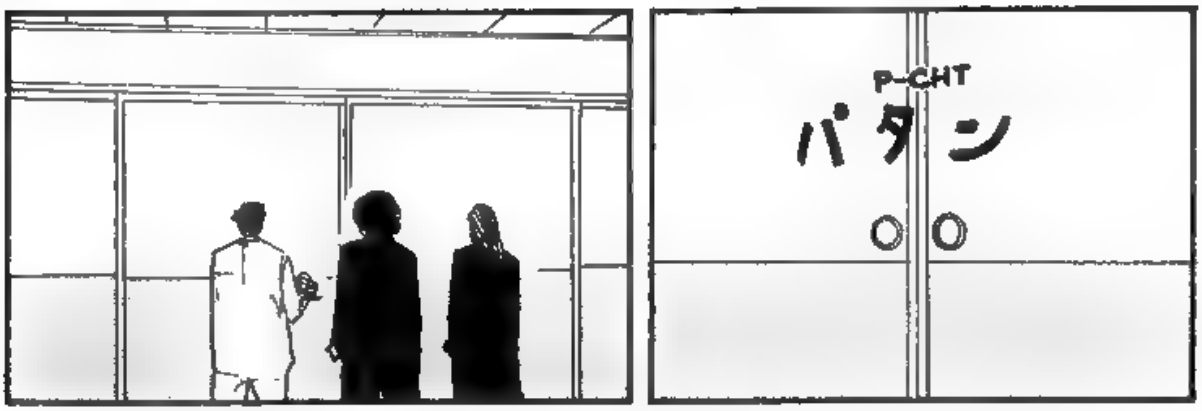

SHHH

OH, YEAH. I CAN'T WAIT.
I'LL BET IT'S SOME GREAT SUSHI.

ALRIGHT, FINE. I'LL LEAVE HIM BE.
ANYWAY, I BET THAT GORILLA'S COMIN' UP WITH A WAY TO SHOW HIS GRATITUDE, TOO.

WHAT DO YOU THINK HE'S GONNA GIVE US?!
AH! HE CAME OUT!



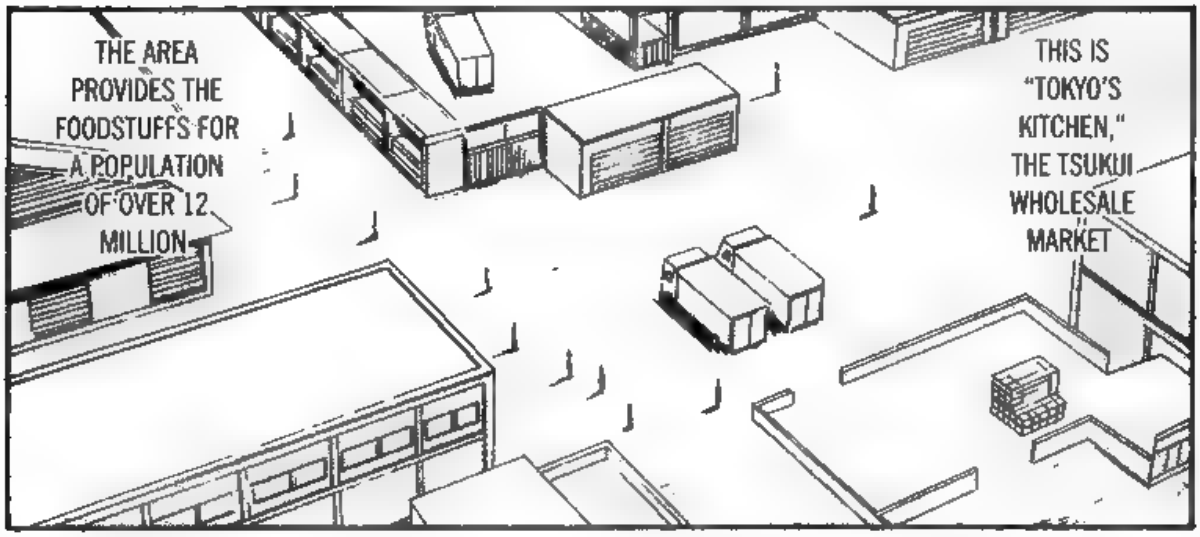


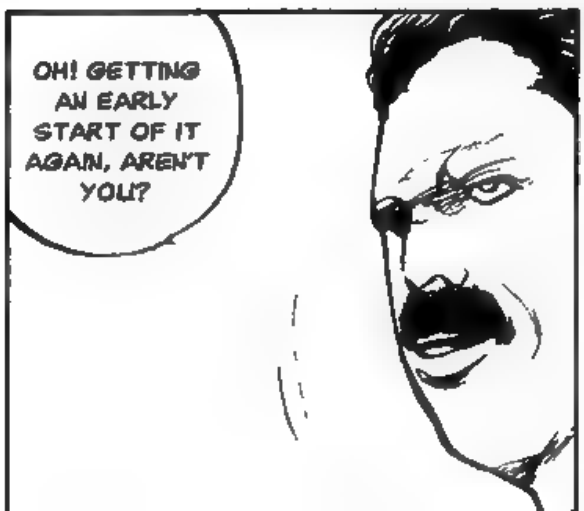
AFTER ALL, HE *IS* A GORILLA.

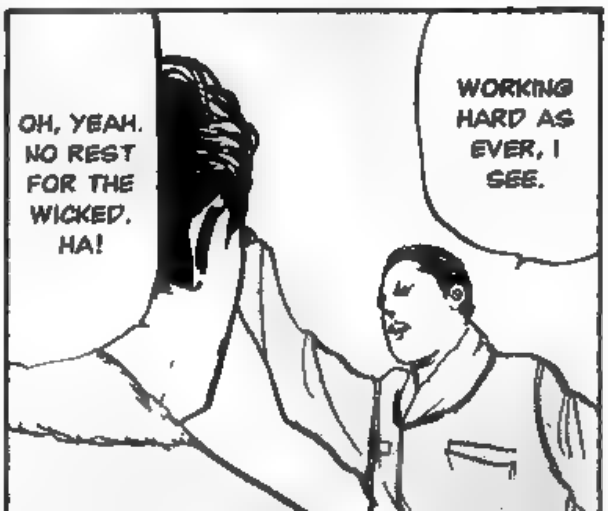
GORILLA SUSHI

PART 1
A TALE OF SKILL AND PROSPERITY

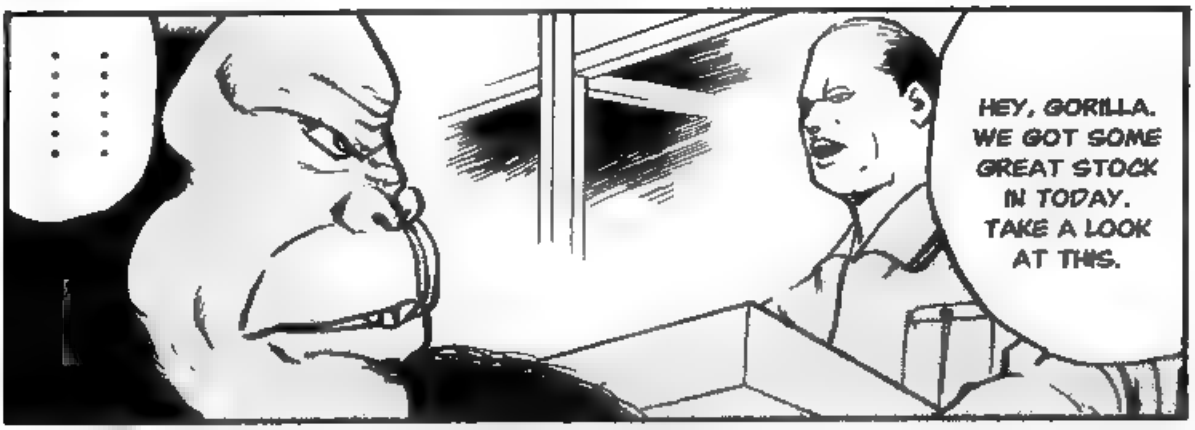
CHAPTER 152: **SUPER FISH MARKET CRASH**

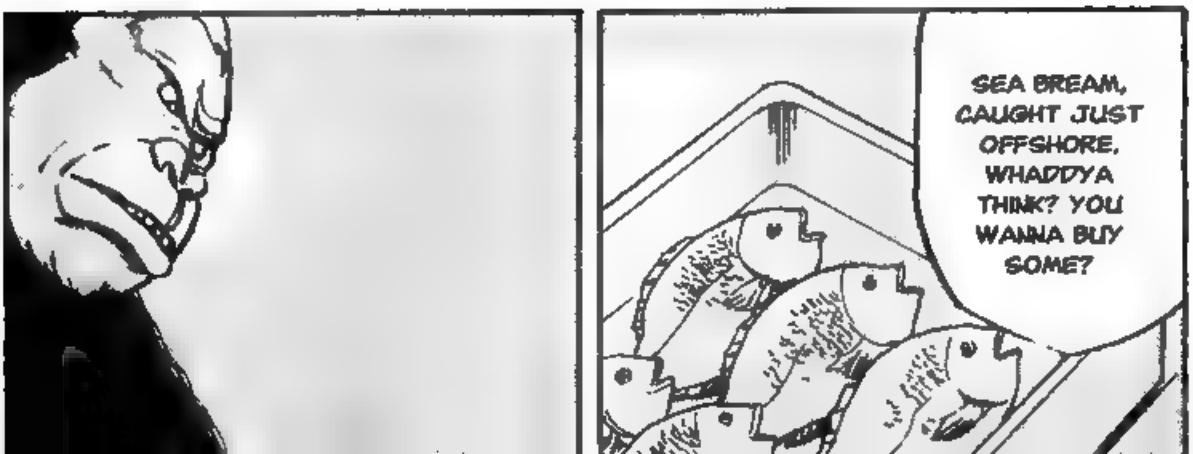

THE AREA PROVIDES THE FOODSTUFFS FOR A POPULATION OF OVER 12 MILLION.
THIS IS "TOKYO'S KITCHEN," THE TSUKIJI WHOLESALE MARKET



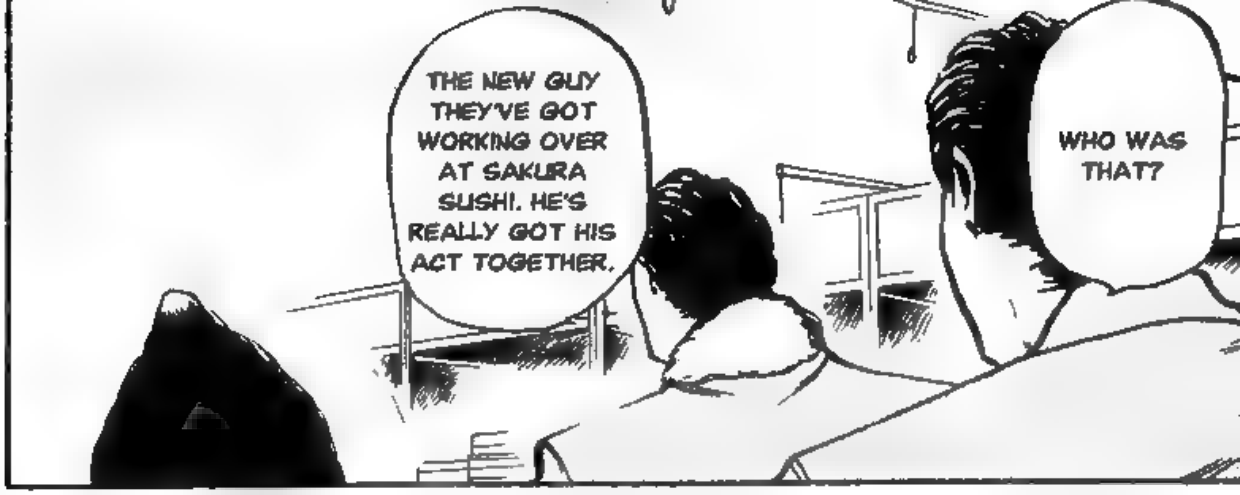


GOOD MORNING TO YOU, GORILLA!
. . . . . .

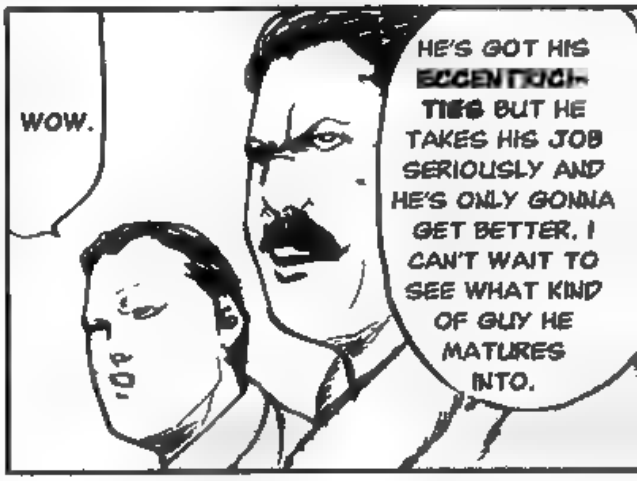

. . . . . .
HEY, GORILLA. WE GOT SOME GREAT STOCK IN TODAY. TAKE A LOOK AT THIS.

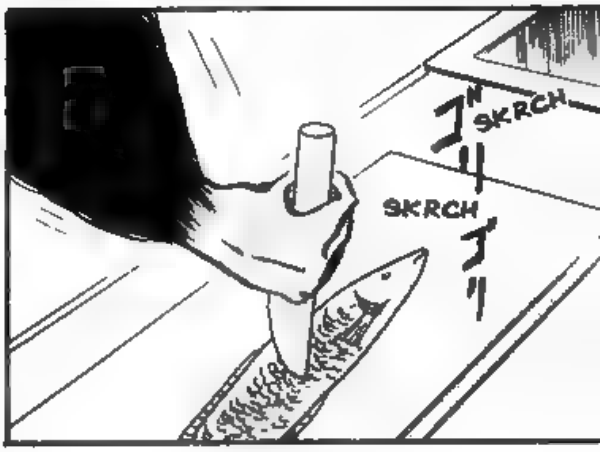

SEA BREAM, CAUGHT JUST OFFSHORE. WHADDYA THINK? YOU WANNA BUY SOME?

HUH?
SHP
WHAT DO YOU SAY WE MAKE IT FOUR?
WAHAHA! YOU GOT ME. YOUVE REALLY GOT AN EYE FOR THE GOOD STUFF! ALRIGHT, GO AHEAD AND TAKE 'EM.
HEY, GORILLA! ANOTHER GOOD BUY, HUH?
WHAAT? OK, FINE, YOU CAN HAVE 'EM FOR THREE. YOU DRIVE A HARD BARGAIN, GORILLA.


THE NEW GUY THEY'VE GOT WORKING OVER AT SAKURA SUSHI. HE'S REALLY GOT HIS ACT TOGETHER.
WHO WAS THAT?

GORILLA SUSH

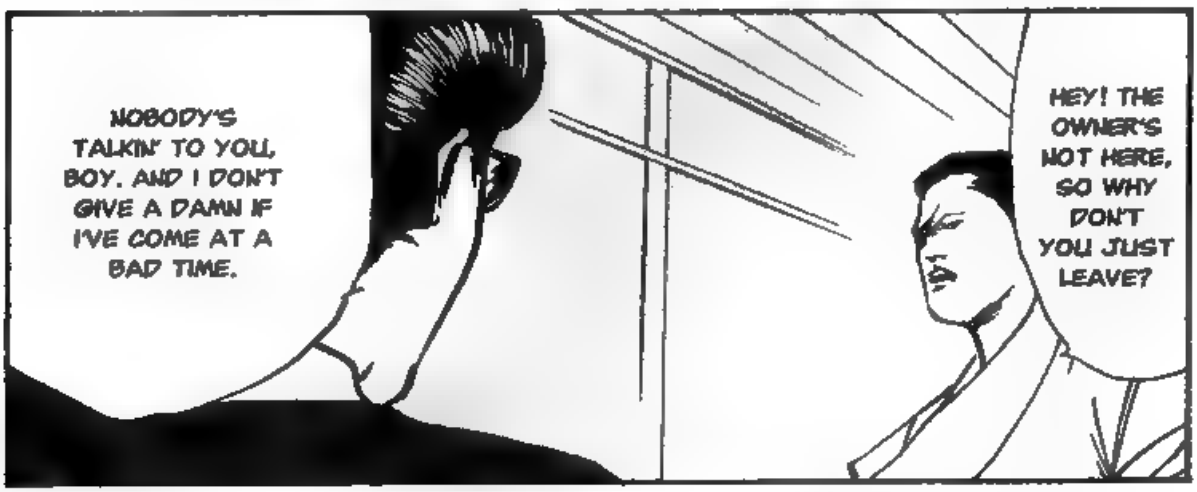

WOW.
HE'S GOT HIS ECCENTRICITIES BUT HE TAKES HIS JOB SERIOUSLY AND HE'S ONLY GONNA GET BETTER. I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHAT KIND OF GUY HE MATURES INTO.


SKRCH
SKRCH

HEY THERE, [redacted] AT WORK, EH?

SHIP
OH, THAT'S RIGHT. THE BOSS SAID HE WAS THINKIN' OF HAVING YOU MAKE A COUPLE DISHES.
LET ME TRY ONE.
NI-MONO. HUH?
HA! YOU ALREADY WENT AND MADE SOME IN SECRET, DID YOU?
NO MATTER WHAT KIND OF COOKING IT IS, ONE THING STAYS THE SAME: A GUY WITH TALENT IS GOING TO MAKE GREAT FOOD. AND I'D SAY YOU'VE GOT A NATURAL GIFT.
EXCELLENT! YOU'VE TAKEN THESE LEFTOVERS AND BREATHED NEW LIFE INTO 'EM.
.....
HUH?!
THAT'S ENOUGH OUTTA YOU! YOU'RE ASKIN' FOR IT, YOU SON OF A BITCH!

THAT GUY AGAIN? HE'S A LAND SHARK, AND HE'S BAD NEWS.
WHAT-EVER, CHUMP. JUST HURRY UP AND SIGN THIS.
I'M TELLING YOU. THE OWNER ISN'T IN RIGHT NOW, SO...


NOBODY'S TALKIN' TO YOU, BOY. AND I DON'T GIVE A DAMN IF I'VE COME AT A BAD TIME.
HEY! THE OWNER'S NOT HERE, SO WHY DON'T YOU JUST LEAVE?

AAH, WHATEVER. YOU PUNKS CAN'T TELL ME WHAT TO DO! I MEAN, THE GUY WHO RUNS THIS PLACE IS--
YOU GUYS ARE A BUNCH OF FREAKS, YOU KNOW THAT? WHAT ARE YOU SO DETERMINED TO HOLD ON TO SOME RUN-DOWN SUSHI SHOP FOR?

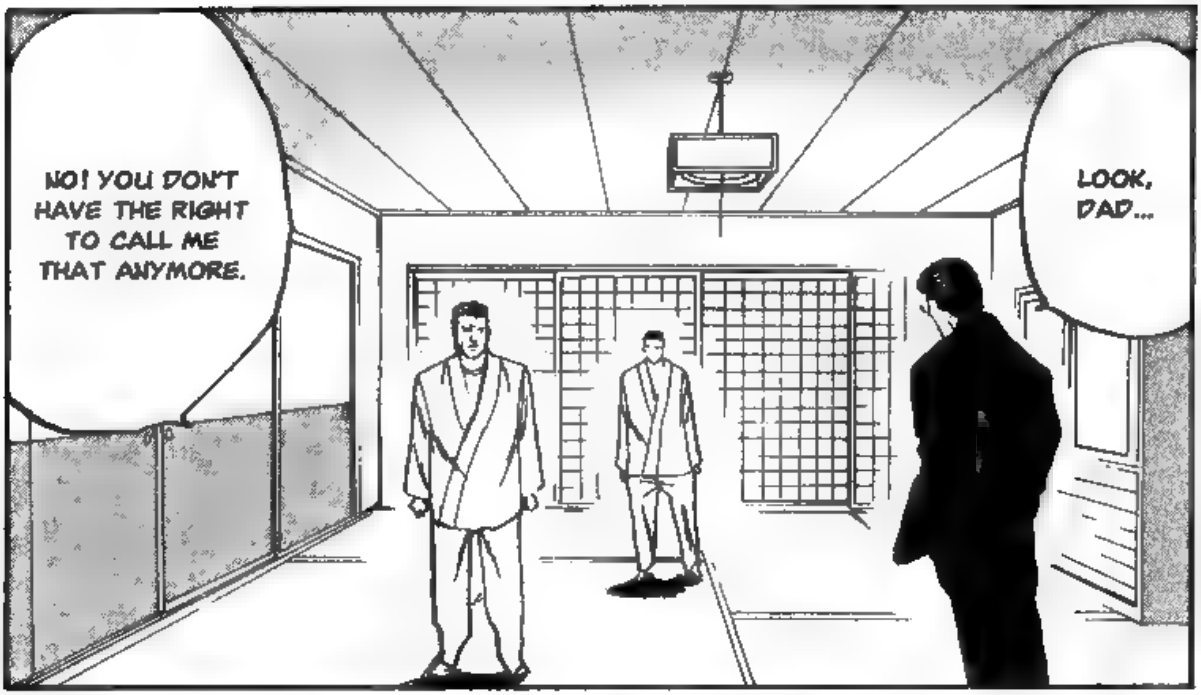
HUH?
GRIP
AAUGH!
BOSS!
!!
GOR, WAIT!

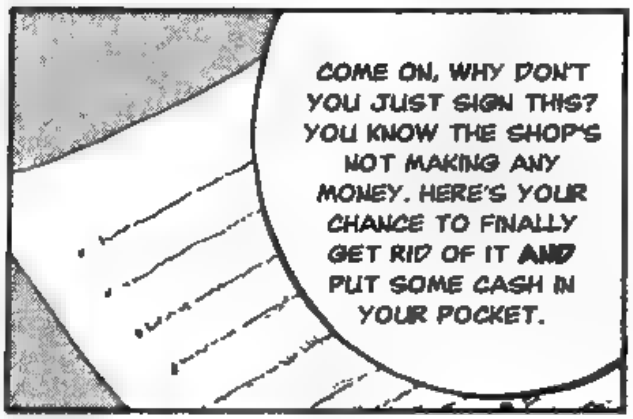
NOW THAT THE GORILLA KNOWS THE LAND SHARK IS REALLY THE BOSS'S SON (!), WHAT WILL HE DO IN THE MERE EIGHT PAGES HE'S BEEN AFFORDED IN THE NEXT CHAPTER?! READ AND FIND OUT!

GORILLA SUSHI

PART 2
A TALE OF SKILL AND PROSPERITY

CHAPTER 153: **FATHER**




COME ON, WHY DON'T YOU JUST SIGN THIS? YOU KNOW THE SHOP'S NOT MAKING ANY MONEY. HERE'S YOUR CHANCE TO FINALLY GET RID OF IT **AND** PUT SOME CASH IN YOUR POCKET.

ARE YOU REALLY THAT ATTACHED TO THE PLACE? OR ARE YOU JUST EMBARRASSED TO SIGN A CONTRACT WITH YOUR OWN SON?
IT'S A GOOD DEAL, RIGHT? BESIDES, IT'S NOT LIKE YOU'VE GOT ANYONE TO TAKE OVER FOR YOU WHEN YOU RETIRE.

CRACK
I GUESS THIS NEGO-TIATION IS OVER.
SPSH
BOSS!
THOMP
ONLY THE SECOND, HUH? I SHOULD'VE HIT YOU A LOT MORE.
HEH. THIS IS THE SECOND TIME YOU'VE HIT ME.

YOU TOLD ME I WASN'T WIPING IT DOWN RIGHT OR SOMETHING AND YOU SMACKED ME FOR IT. I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'D HIT ME FOR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
I'LL NEVER FORGET...THE FIRST TIME YOU HIT ME WAS ALSO THE FIRST TIME I GOT TO STAND BEHIND THE COUNTER.

I DID EVERYTHING I COULD TO PREPARE YOU TO BECOME A FIRST-RATE SUSHI CHEF. I EVEN THOUGHT THAT ONE DAY I'D BE LEAVING YOU THIS RESTAURANT.
A CHILD HAS A DUTY TO CARRY OUT THE WILL OF HIS PARENT! WOULD YOU AGREE WITH EVEN THAT?!

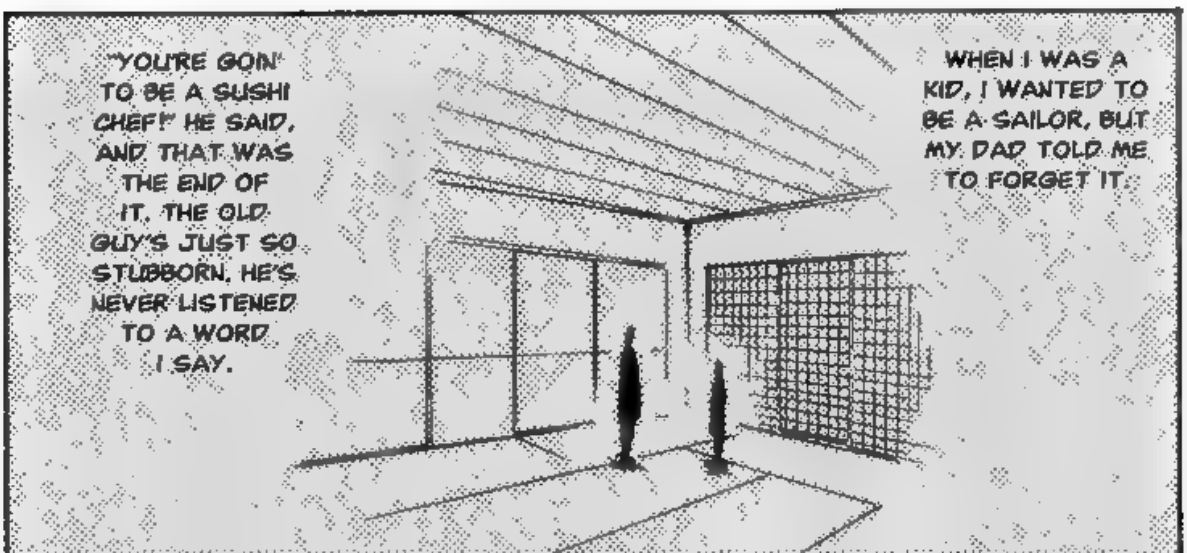
IT WAS AROUND THAT TIME I STARTED TURNING BAD. YOU REMEMBER THAT?
IT'S YOUR OWN FAULT YOU TURNED OUT THE WAY YOU DID. DON'T GO TRYING TO BLAME IT ON SOMEONE ELSE.

BOSS!
DON'T COME HERE AGAIN OR I'LL HAVE TO GET THE PLACE FUMIGATED!
AN IDIOT TILL THE DAY YOU DIE, HUH? WHATEVER. I'LL BE BACK.

SWP
HM?
OW... THAT IDIOT.

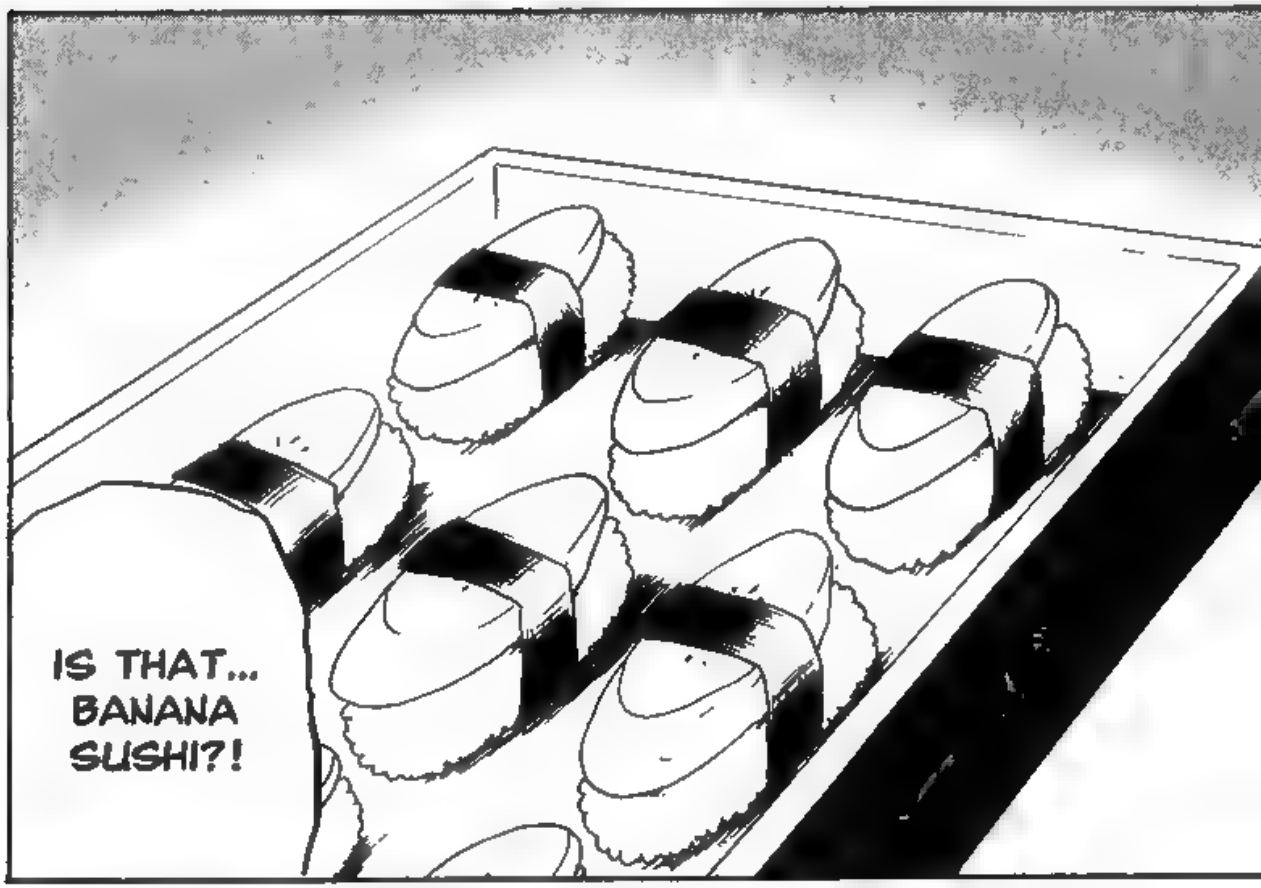
OH, IT'S YOU.

ME AND MY DAD...WE HAVEN'T GOTTEN ALONG FOR A LONG TIME. WE HAVEN'T REALLY SPOKEN IN YEARS.
YOU'RE NEW, ARE YA? LOOKS LIKE YOU GOT TO SEE A LITTLE FAMILY DRAMA THERE.


"YOU'RE GOIN' TO BE A SUSHI CHEF!" HE SAID, AND THAT WAS THE END OF IT. THE OLD GUY'S JUST SO STUBBORN. HE'S NEVER LISTENED TO A WORD I SAY.
WHEN I WAS A KID, I WANTED TO BE A SAILOR, BUT MY DAD TOLD ME TO FORGET IT.

THERE'S NO WAY WE COULD EVER WORK THINGS OUT NOW... ANYWAY, SEE YA AROUND.
GORILLA SUSHI
SSSH
SIGH
THAT IDIOT.
SHP
WHAT IS IT, GOR?

WHAT IS THAT?!
WHAT...


IS THAT... BANANA SUSHI?!

NOW WAIT JUST A MINUTE! I KNOW THE MORE EXOTIC KINDS OF SUSHI HAVE GOTTEN POPULAR LATELY, BUT YOU CAN'T USE BANANAS! I MEAN, THAT'S JUST...

I TOLD YOU. WHAT THE HECK KIND OF FLAVOR IS THIS ANYWAY?! YOU CAN'T EVEN CALL IT FOOD!
BLGH!
=COUGH=
BUT I'M TELLIN' YOU, IT'S GONNA TASTE TERRIBLE.
OK, FINE. I'LL TRY ONE.
YOU CAN'T FORCE SOMETHING ONTO SOMEONE ELSE JUST BECAUSE YOU LIKE IT! THAT'S NOT WHAT A FIRST-RATE CHEF WOULD DO. IT'S EGOTISM, PURE AND SIMPLE!
NOW LISTEN, ALRIGHT? I KNOW HOW FOND YOU ARE OF BANANAS, BUT YOU CAN'T GO USING THEM IN COOKING! IT JUST DOESN'T WORK!
AH!
THAT...THAT'S JUST WHAT I TRIED TO DO BY FORCING MY SON TO BECOME A SUSHI CHEF! I WAS JUST IMPOSING MY OWN WILL WITHOUT PAYING ATTENTION TO WHAT HE WANTED!
"YOU CAN'T FORCE SOMETHING ONTO SOMEONE ELSE JUST BECAUSE YOU LIKE IT."

TRUE TO FORM, WE COULDN'T WRAP IT UP IN JUST EIGHT PAGES! NEXT TIME-- WILL THE GORILLA'S BANANA SUSHI BE ABLE TO SWAY THE HUMAN HEART?!

GORILLA SUSHI

PART 3
A TALE OF SKILL AND PROSPERITY

CHAPTER 154: **THE END**

I REALLY THINK I INHERITED MY STUBBORNNESS FROM YOU.
FATHER...
I'D BETTER GET READY TO OPEN THE SHOP.
HMPH. IS THAT THE TIME ALREADY?
I USED TO PUT UP SUCH A FIGHT AGAINST YOU AND YOUR PIGHEADEDNESS... HEH. BUT BEFORE I KNEW IT, I'D BECOME A STUBBORN OLD MAN, JUST LIKE YOU.

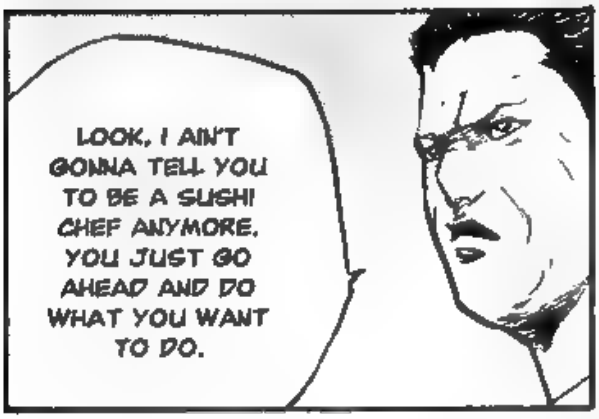
HELLO?
RATTLE
カラッ
IT'S ALREADY OPEN.
RATTLE
カラー
HUH?
GO
I HAD SOME TIME TO KILL. SO I THOUGHT I'D COME BY AND LEND A HAND. IT'S BEEN A WHILE, HUH? AND DON'T WORRY, I'M NOT OUT TO MAKE FUN OF YOU OR ANYTHING.
YOU! B-BUT...
SPLASH
SPLASH
SPLASH

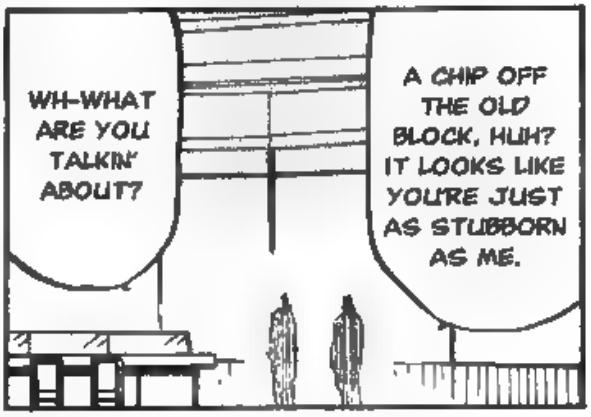
IT WAS PRETTY FRICKIN' DIFFICULT. BUT YOU MANAGE TO DO IT EVERY SINGLE DAY. I'M IMPRESSED, POPS.
I TRIED TO CLEAN SOME FISH JUST NOW, AND YOU KNOW WHAT?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND. WHAT BROUGHT ALL THIS ON?
LOOK.
THE TRUTH IS, I GOT THIS.
YOU'VE SEEN THIS TOO, HAVE YOU?
THE BA-NANA SUSHI!
TH-THAT'S ...
AH!

WE HUMANS ARE PRETTY SELFISH CREATURES. WE TRY TO FORCE WHAT WE THINK IS GOOD ONTO OTHERS.

HEH. YOU GOT ONE TOO, HUH?
GOR! HE GAVE YOU THIS, DIDN'T HE?

YEAH, I AM. BUT DON'T GET YOURSELF ALL BENT OUT OF SHAPE ABOUT IT. I'M NO DIFFERENT-- THAT'S PROBABLY WHY I GOT SOME OF THAT BANANA SUSHI, TOO.
ARE YOU TALKIN' ABOUT ME?


LOOK, I AIN'T GONNA TELL YOU TO BE A SUSHI CHEF ANYMORE. YOU JUST GO AHEAD AND DO WHAT YOU WANT TO DO.


WH-WHAT ARE YOU TALKIN' ABOUT?
A CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK, HUH? IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE JUST AS STUBBORN AS ME.

NEXT TIME I COME IN HERE... I DON'T THINK I'LL BE WEARIN' THESE CLOTHES ANYMORE.

OH, SHOOT! I GOTTA GET GOIN'!
BUT YOU REALLY NEED TO QUIT THAT JOB OF YOURS.

HOW ABOUT FINDING A JOB FOR A DISH-WASHER OR SOMETHIN', HUH?
SEE YA.
RATTLE!
I'M GLAD YOU FI-NALLY MADE UP.
SO WE OWE IT ALL TO GOR.
GORILL
WELL, I WAS THINKIN' IT'S ABOUT TIME I LEAVE THIS SHOP TO YOU...AND I'LL LET GOR HANDLE THE OTHER ONE.
YOU REMEMBER HOW I TOLD YOU I WAS THINKING OF OPENING UP ANOTHER SHOP?
WELL, THE TRUTH IS...
THAT'S RIGHT. IS THERE SOMETHIN' ON YOUR MIND?
Y-YOU WANT TO LEAVE THE OTHER SHOP TO

SOMEONE WITH HIS KIND OF TALENT DOESN'T COME ALONG EVERY DAY. AND I KNOW I'LL BE ABLE TO TRUST HIM TO RUN THINGS RIGHT!
I FIGURED.
I WAS THINKING THE SAME THING.

HE'S DEFINITELY GOT SKILL, AND A FINE SENSE WHEN IT COMES TO MAKING SUSHI. HE'S GOT HIS ECCENTRICITIES. BUT HE'S GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A FIRST-RATE CHEF. STILL...
HM?
DO YOU MIND IF I SAY SOMETHING?

THAT'S NO GORILLA--HE'S FAMILY! NO, MORE THAN THAT! YOU DARE PASS JUDGMENT ON HIM JUST BECAUSE OF HOW HE LOOKS?!
YOU WATCH YOUR MOUTH!
HE'S, UH, A GORILLA.

NOW YOU GET THIS STRAIGHT--GOR IS NO GORILLA!
TRY PUTTING YOURSELF IN HIS SHOES FOR A CHANGE!
FORGIVE ME.

GORILLA SUSH
GOOD. ANYWAY, IT'S GETTING LATE. I'LL TALK WITH HIM ABOUT THIS TOMORROW.
YES, SIR.
THE NEXT DAY
CHIRP
CHIRP
GORILLA SUSHI
GOOD MORNING, EVERYONE.
'MORN-ING.
GOOD MORNING!
SAY, HAS ANYONE SEEN GOR?
LET'S ALL DO OUR BEST TODAY!
GOOD MORNING, BOSS!

THEY TAKE GORILLAS TO THE ANIMAL SHELTER?

THE DIARY OF SHINJIRO HAYASHIDA

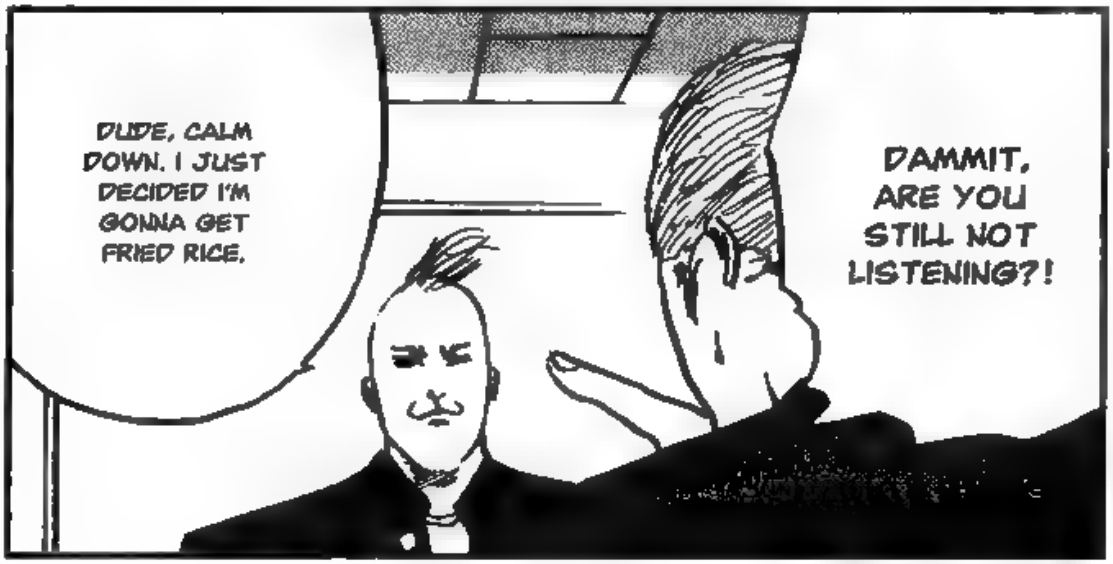
Dear Diary,

Today Maeda and Kamiyama came up to me saying they had something really important they wanted to talk to me about. So we went to go eat ramen. I couldn't decide whether I wanted miso or shio ramen, so I ended up just getting fried rice. Also, the regular old ramen they serve there is pretty terrible.

Some ramen places put little bits of chopped naruto into the fried rice, but I don't think that tastes too good. I also think it's strange that fried rice is the only thing they serve that comes with soup.

That's all.

THE DIARY OF AKIRA MAEDA



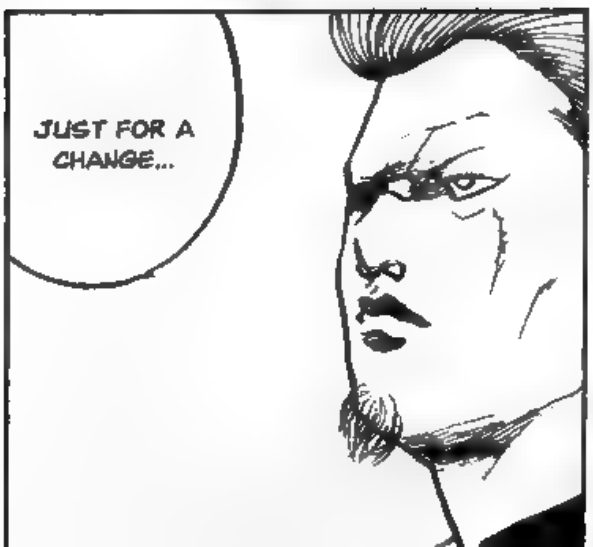
Dear Diary,

Today, I decided it was time to give that idiot Hayashida a good talking-to for all the trouble he caused the other day. Kamiyama and I went up to him together, but all Hayashida would talk about was how he wanted some ramen. Fine, so we went to a ramen shop, figuring we could talk to him about it there.

Once we were at the restaurant, though the idiot couldn't decide what he wanted and took FOREVER to order something. Finally I couldn't take it anymore and I let him have it, but I don't think it even registered. He just babbled something about naruto and that was pretty much it. Then I tried to give him that talking-to but he wouldn't listen to a word I said. He just kept staring at the soup that came with his fried rice. It was a complete waste of time.

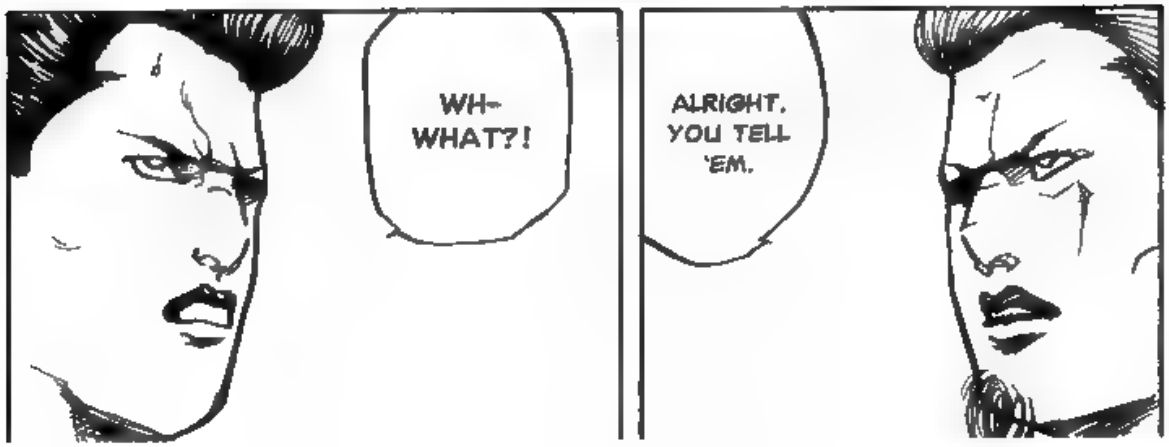
I want nothing more to do with that guy. Ever.

CHAPTER 155: **STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND**



WHY DON'T WE MAKE THOSE GUYS GO?
.....

NOT THAT, LIKE, WE DO SO MUCH THAT WE'RE IN A POSITION TO CRITICIZE, BUT...
YEAH! THEY LOOK TOUGH BUT THEY NEVER DO ANYTHING!
THINK ABOUT IT--WE CAN'T LET GUYS LIKE THAT JUST SIT AROUND AND PLAY ALL THE TIME.


WH-WHAT?!
ALRIGHT. YOU TELL 'EM.

HANG ON A SECOND! I'VE NEVER EVEN SPOKEN TO 'EM BEFORE! FOR ME TO JUST WALK UP AND START GIVING THEM ORDERS IS...
WHY ME?!
YOU'RE GONNA TELL 'EM THEY HAVE TO GO FIGHT.
JEEZ, MAN! DON'T THEY HAVE ANY FRIENDS THAT COULD ASK FOR US?
I FOLLOW YOU. IT'S NOT LIKE THEY'RE SCARY 'CUZ THEY'RE SO STRONG... THEY'RE JUST FUNDAMENTALLY SCARY.
WELL, IT'S KINDA SCARY.
YES?
HEY, KAMI-YAMA?
YOU MEAN, SOMEONE CLOSE TO THEM? OH! KAMIYAMA!
HMM. WELL, I SUPPOSE I COULD TRY ASKING.
THE GUYS AT BASS HAVE TAKEN ONE OF OUR MEN AGAIN. WE'D LIKE THEM TO GO HELP HIM OUT BUT, UH...

I BELIEVE THAT A PICTURE WOULD MAKE OUR REQUEST EASIER TO UNDERSTAND
WHAT ARE YOU DOIN'?
SQIK
SQIK
HEY, FREDDIE!
?!
REALLY?!
OK!
. . . . . .
YOUR GOAL IS TO RESCUE OUR CLASSMATE, NOTHING MORE.
KEEP IN MIND, HOWEVER, THAT FIGHTING IS NOT YOUR OBJECTIVE. BE CAREFUL NOT TO GO OVERBOARD.

I'M START-IN' TO GET WOR-RIED.
I'LL GO AHEAD AND DRAW A MAP, JUST TO BE SAFE.
UH, BUT COULDN'T HE HAVE JUST EXPLAINED IT VERBALLY FROM THE START?
THAT'S KAMIYAMA FOR YA. HE'S A REAL STICKLER FOR DETAIL!
IT'S LIKE WATCHIN' YOUR KID RUN HIS FIRST ERRAND. I FEEL QUEASY!
Ah! That's the wrong street!
MAN. WE WERE SO NERVOUS THAT WE HAD TO COME ALONG AND WATCH.
FREDDIE! NO!

THIS IS BAD, MAN! YOU GOTTA STOP HIM!
THOSE ARE YAKUZA!
Aiee!
Gah!

Let's get outta here!
Dammit! We'll remember this!
THINGS ARE ONLY GONNA GET WORSE....
I TOLD YOU. YOUR ENEMIES WILL BE WEARING SCHOOL UNIFORMS!

YOU THINK HE'S SULKING?
HE SAT DOWN.

H-HEY! LOOK!
HUH?

HE'S LIKE A FRICKIN' KID.
STAY RIGHT BEHIND ME, PRUDDY.

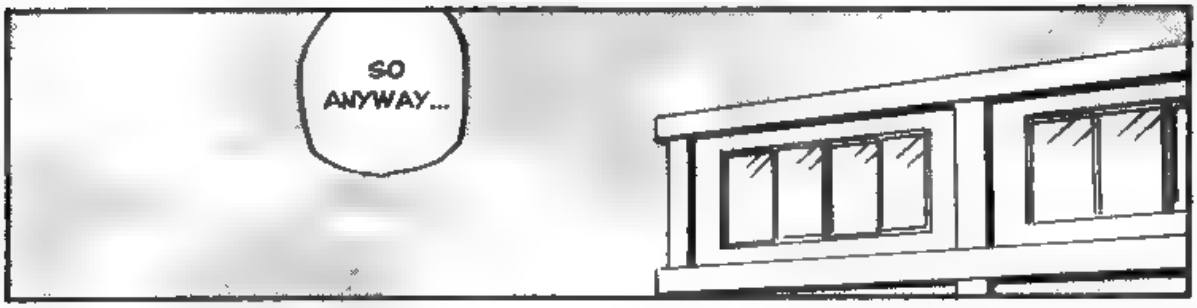
WE'LL JUST HAVE TO TAKE HIM THERE OUR-SELVES.
THIS IS HOPE-LESS!

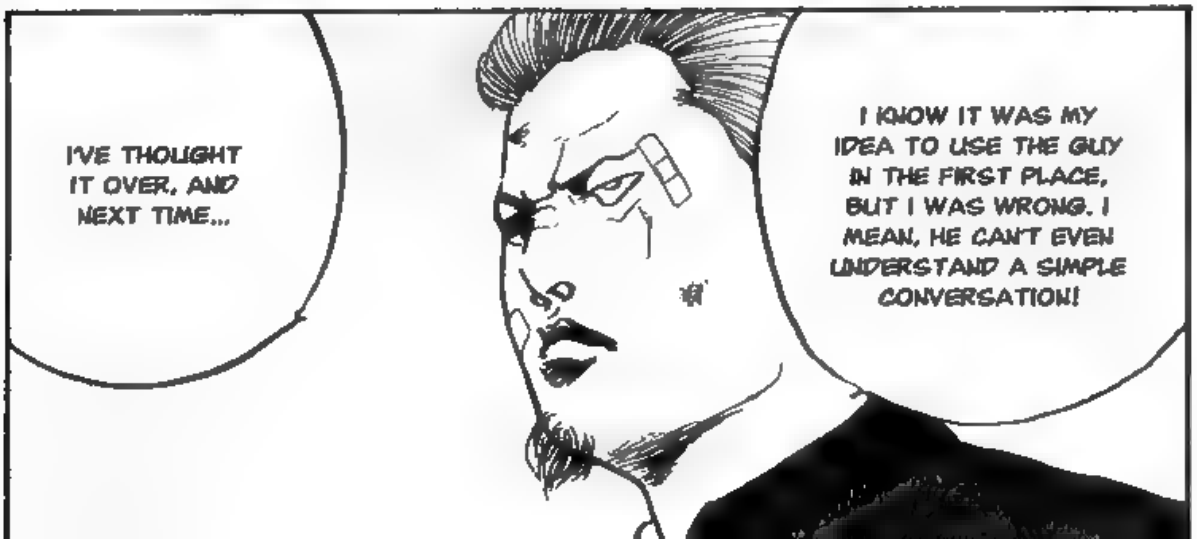
MAN, BASS SURE IS FAR!
≒PHEW≒ WE'RE FINALLY HERE.
ONE HOUR LATER
IT'S AN AM-BUSH!
SWISH
HA! SO YOU PUNKS FINALLY SHOWED UP, HUH?
YOU BETTER WATCH THAT MOUTH, BOY! WE BROUGHT SOME REAL HEAVY HITTERS WITH US TODAY.
YOU ALL ARE DEAD, YOU KNOW THAT? I DON'T CARE HOW TOUGH YOU CROMARTIE GUYS ARE, WITH THIS MANY PEOPLE ON OUR SIDE, YOU DON'T STAND A CHANCE.
BUT THIS NO ORDINARY OLD DUDE! YOU'RE ALL ABOUT TO FIND OUT THAT THIS DUDE IS...
HEH. TO CHUMPS LIKE YOU HE MIGHT JUST LOOK LIKE SOME OLD DUDE...
"HEAVY HITTERS." HUH? LIKE THAT OLD DUDE [redacted] YOU?

WE SEEM TO HAVE MADE A MISTAKE SOMEWHERE.
HE'S JUST SOME OLD DUDE!
WHO THE HELL IS THIS GUY?!
NO! PUT DOWN THAT STAMP!
Y-YOU'RE RIGHT!
MONTHLY GOALS
WAIT A MINUTE! THAT'S NOT IMAI-KUN, IS IT?!
SO, ARE YOU GOING TO APPROVE THIS CONTRACT OR NOT?

MUST'VE BEEN THE MUSTACHE.

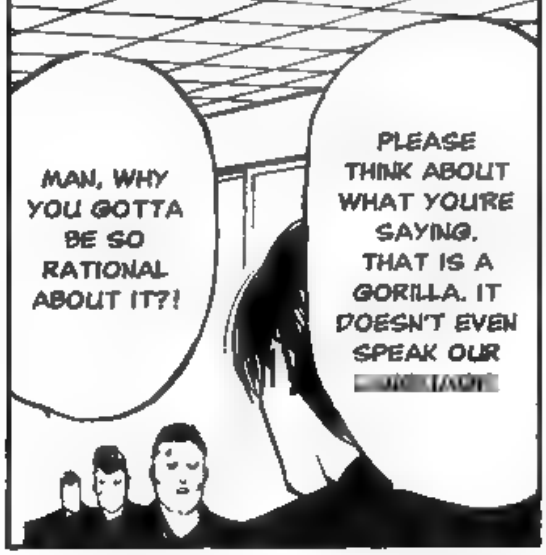
CHAPTER 156: **BOYS & GIRLS**




I'VE THOUGHT IT OVER, AND NEXT TIME...
I KNOW IT WAS MY IDEA TO USE THE GUY IN THE FIRST PLACE, BUT I WAS WRONG. I MEAN, HE CAN'T EVEN UNDERSTAND A SIMPLE CONVERSATION!

NOW HANG ON A SECOND!
WE SHOULD ASK THIS GUY TO GO.
HUH? WELL, I...
YOU'RE JUST FULL OF PREJUDICES, AREN'T YOU? HOW DOES SIMPLY BEING A GORILLA MAKE HIM A BAD CHOICE?
DEALIN' WITH FREDDIE WAS BAD ENOUGH. WHY WOULD WE GO FROM HIM TO A GORILLA?!
IF YOU WERE GONNA SEND ONE OF THEM TO GO FETCH A BALL, WHICH ONE WOULD YOU CHOOSE?
LET'S SAY THAT ON THE ONE HAND YOU'VE GOT A SUPER-SMART DOG, AND ON THE OTHER YOU'VE GOT A FRIGGIN STUPID HUMAN.

YOU'RE DAMN RIGHT! AN OBEDIENT ANIMAL IS GONNA BE A LOT MORE USEFUL THAN SOME DUMB HUMAN.
THE DOG?
. . . . . .
HUH? WHAT'S UP TO ME?
THAT'S WHY IT'S UP TO YOU.
WHAT?! I CAN'T DO THAT! WE'VE BEEN OVER THIS, MAN!
LOOK, JUST EXPLAIN THINGS TO THE GORILLA AND TELL HIM TO GO GET THOSE GUYS AT BASS.
KAMIYAMA, WE MADE A MISTAKE IN ASKIN' FREDDIE TO GO TAKE ON BASS. THIS TIME, WE WANT THE GORILLA TO GO. CAN YOU BREAK THINGS DOWN TO HIM FOR US?
YES?
HEY!
WE'LL HAVE TO ASK KAMI-YAMA AGAIN.

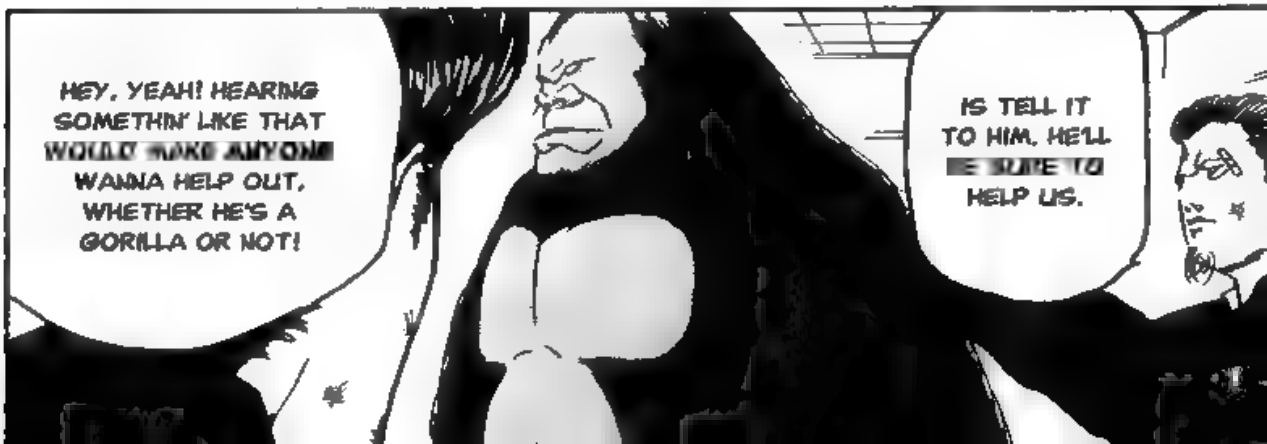

MAN, WHY YOU GOTTA BE SO RATIONAL ABOUT IT?!
PLEASE THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE SAYING. THAT IS A GORILLA. IT DOESN'T EVEN SPEAK OUR [redacted]

EVEN **YOU** CAN'T DO IT?!
HMM, I THINK THAT'S GOING TO PROVE RATHER DIFFICULT.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
FINE. THIS CALLS FOR A CHANGE IN TACTICS.

WHAT ABOUT YOU, YOTCHAN?! WHY DON'T YOU COME UP WITH A PLAN OR SOMETHING?
BUNCH OF USELESS SONS OF BITCHES.

"LADY GORILLA'S LIFE IS IN THE BALANCE!" THAT'S OUR STORY, RIGHT? AND NOW THAT WE'VE GOT OUR STORY, ALL WE HAVE TO DO...
FIRST, WE'LL SAY THAT THERE'S THIS CUTE GORILLA, AND THE GUYS AT BASS HAVE CAPTURED HER.


HEY, YEAH! HEARING SOMETHIN' LIKE THAT WOULD MAKE ANYONE WANNA HELP OUT, WHETHER HE'S A GORILLA OR NOT!
IS TELL IT TO HIM. HE'LL BE SURE TO HELP US.

PH-PHOTO?!
THE FIRST THING WE GOTTA DO IS GET US A GORILLA PHOTO.
YEAH, THERE IS THAT.
STILL, EXPLAINING ALL THAT IS GONNA BE PRETTY DIFFICULT.
WATCH THIS. I MAKE A FEW ADJUST-MENTS, AND...
NOW THEN.
I MADE THIS COLOR COPY IN THE LIBRARY.
10 MIN-UTES LATER
HEH! THIS'LL DO THE TRICK.
IT-IT'S A LADY GORILLA!
AAH!
YOU GOTTA TAKE THINGS LIKE THIS ONE STEP AT A TIME, MAN! YOU CAN'T EXPECT A SOLUTION RIGHT OFF THE BAT, FOR CHRISSAKES!
WAIT. THIS IS GONNA EXPLAIN IT ALL TO HIM?
YOU GOT IT!
NOW, GO SHOW THAT TO THE GORILLA.

LOOK.
HEY, GO-RILLA.
OK, FINE. I'LL TRY IT.
YOU GUYS RELY ON ME A LITTLE TOO MUCH, YOU KNOW THAT?
HUH?!
TOSS
HMM. YOU KNOW, I WAS WONDERING TO MYSELF, COULD THE GORILLA IN THAT PHOTO...
WHAT?
YOTCHAN, BAD NEWS! HE DIDN'T LIKE THAT GORILLA AT ALL!
TO US HUMANS THEY LOOK THE SAME, BUT NOT TO A GORILLA.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! A GUY GORILLA'S FACE LOOKS JUST THE SAME AS A GIRL'S!
OH, MAN! THEN DRAWIN' A RIBBON ON IT WOULDN'T MAKE NO DIFFERENCE!
BE A GUY?

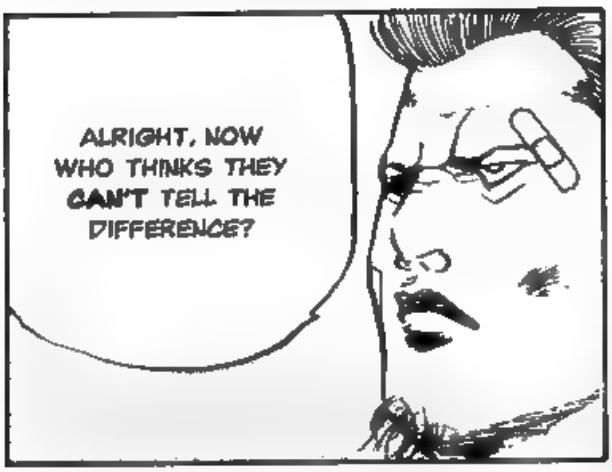
SO, BY THE SAME LOGIC, YOU'RE SAYIN' THAT GORILLAS CAN'T TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE HUMANS?
WAIT A MINUTE THOUGH.
YEAH, THAT MAKES SENSE.
ANY HUMAN CAN, BUT A GORILLA'S A DIFFERENT STORY.
YEAH! ANYONE CAN TELL 'EM APART!
THEY WEAR SKIRTS AND HAVE, LIKE, SLENDER SHOULDERS.
NO FRICKIN' WAY! GIRLS DON'T LOOK ANYTHING LIKE US!
THAT'S RIGHT.
GENERALLY SPEAKING, WE JAPANESE CAN'T TELL AMERICANS OR WHATEVER APART, RIGHT? WE'RE STILL NOT FULLY ACCUSTOMED TO HOW THEY LOOK.
FINE, I'LL EXPLAIN IT TO YOU NICE AND SIMPLE.
NOW I'M TOTALLY CONFUSED!
I SAID GENERALLY SPEAKING! YOU'RE A SPECIAL CASE.
UH, I CAN TELL AMERICANS APART, THOUGH.
SO, OF COURSE, IT MAKES SENSE THAT TO AN AMERICAN, WE JAPANESE ALL LOOK ALIKE.
THAT'S TRUE.

A-ARE YOU BASTARDS SAYIN' MY IDEAS ARE NO GOOD?!
YOU ASK ME, IT'S YOUR IDEAS THAT ARE IN THE MINORITY.

WELL...IT JUST MEANS THAT YOU'RE IN THE MINORITY.
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT. WHAT'S YOUR CRITERIA FOR SAYIN' I'M "SPECIAL"?

WHO THINKS THAT GORILLAS CAN TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HUMAN MALES AND FEMALES?

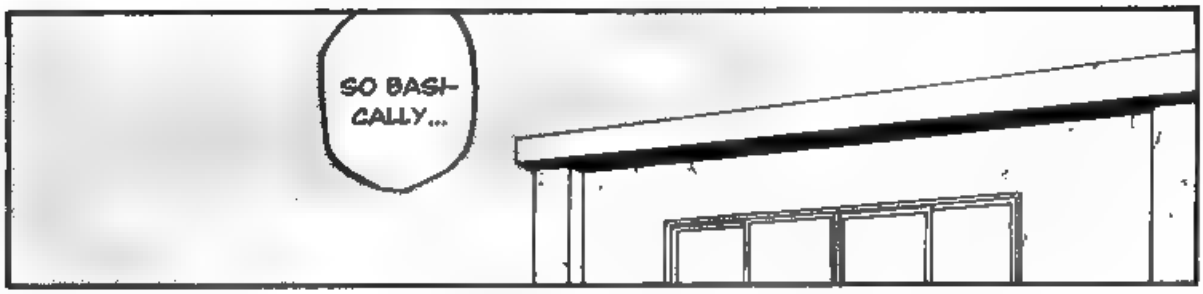
OK.
WHOA. CALM DOWN YOTCHAN. WE SHOULD JUST TAKE A VOTE.


ALRIGHT, NOW WHO THINKS THEY CAN'T TELL THE DIFFERENCE?

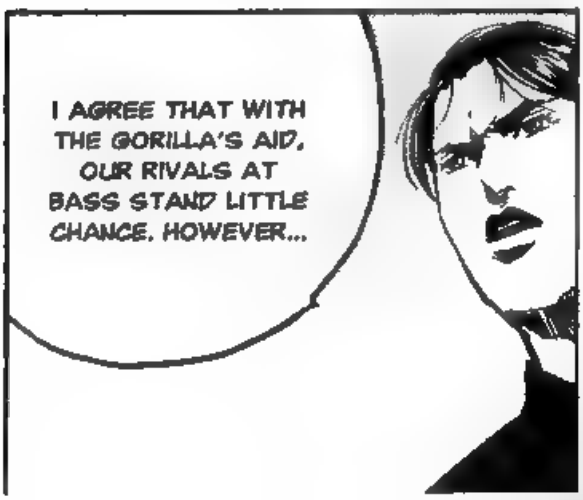
FOUR TO THREE, HUH?

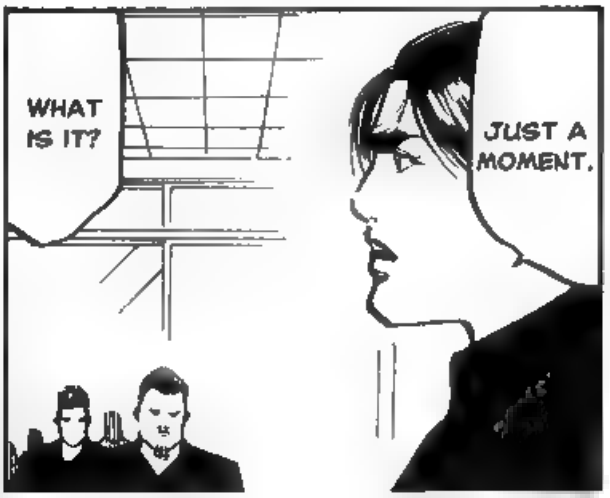
NO, IT'S NOT!

CHAPTER 157: HUMAN LEAGUE



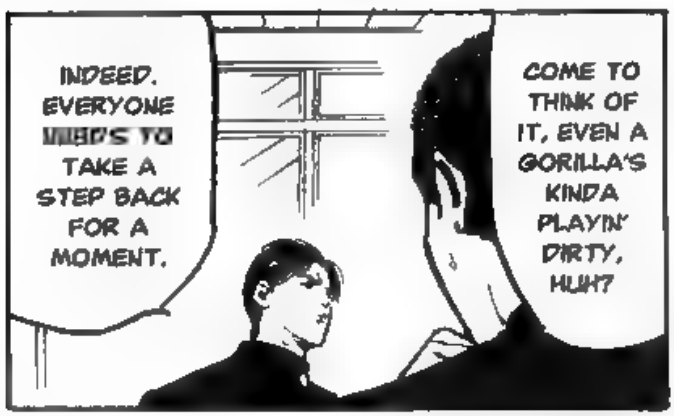
I SAY WE JUST THROW A ROPE AROUND ITS NECK AND TAKE IT THERE. WE CAN FIGURE OUT THE DETAILS ALONG THE WAY.
LOOK, THE BOTTOM LINE IS THAT SO LONG AS WE GOT THAT GORILLA, THERE'S NO WAY THE GUYS AT BASS CAN BEAT US.

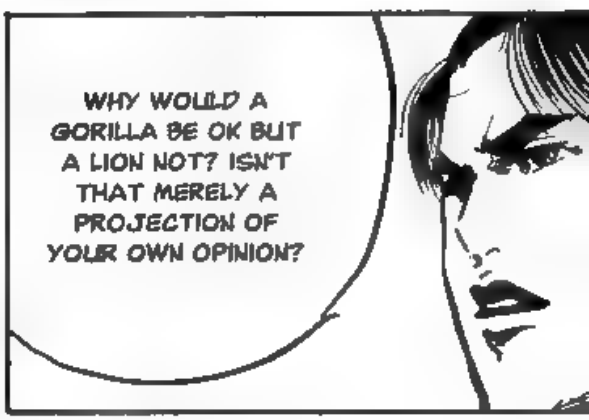


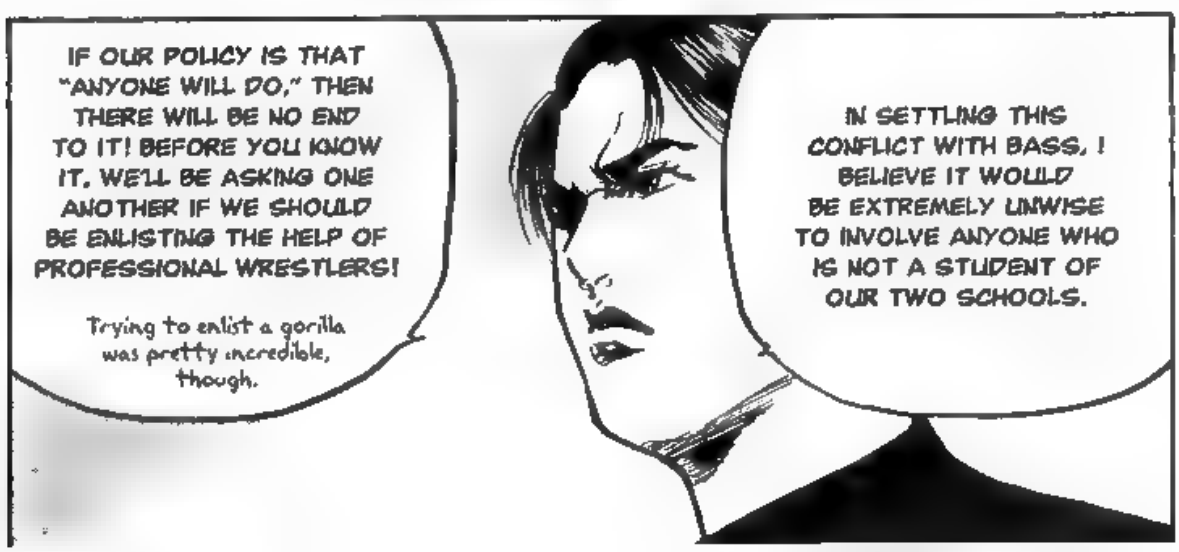


WHAT IS TO STOP THEM FROM RETALIATING ON OUR SCHOOL WITH THE AID OF A LION OR AN ALLIGATOR?
IF WE TAKE OUR SIMIAN FRIEND TO BASS AND HE KNOCKS A FEW HEADS AROUND, IF YOU WILL...

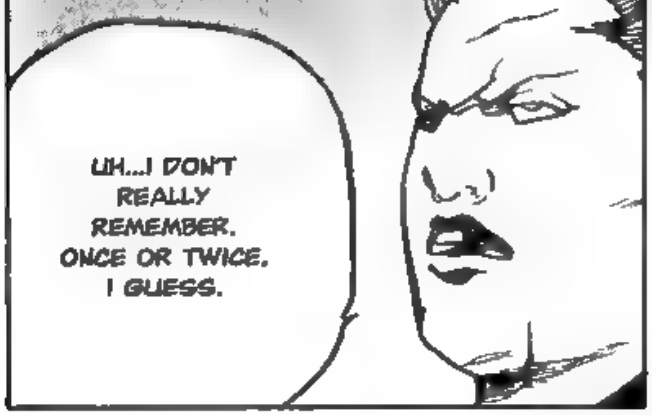
DON'T YOU FIND THAT THINKING TO BE A LITTLE STRANGE?
BUT, LIKE, LIONS AND ALLIGA-TORS ARE AGAINST THE RULES.

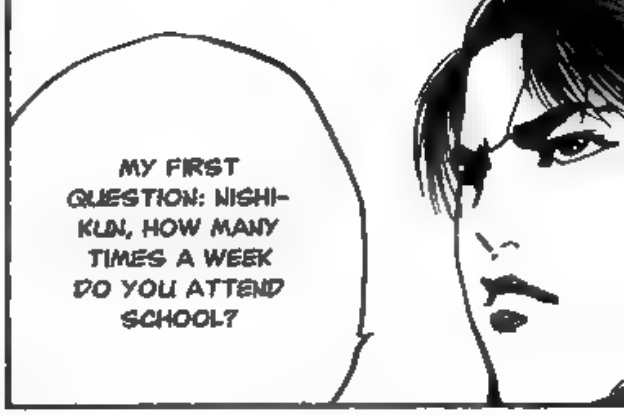

INDEED. EVERYONE NEEDS TO TAKE A STEP BACK FOR A MOMENT.
COME TO THINK OF IT, EVEN A GORILLA'S KINDA PLAYIN' DIRTY, HUH?


WHY WOULD A GORILLA BE OK BUT A LION NOT? ISN'T THAT MERELY A PROJECTION OF YOUR OWN OPINION?


IF OUR POLICY IS THAT "ANYONE WILL DO," THEN THERE WILL BE NO END TO IT! BEFORE YOU KNOW IT, WE'LL BE ASKING ONE ANOTHER IF WE SHOULD BE ENLISTING THE HELP OF PROFESSIONAL WRESTLERS!
Trying to enlist a gorilla was pretty incredible, though.
IN SETTLING THIS CONFLICT WITH BASS, I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE EXTREMELY UNWISE TO INVOLVE ANYONE WHO IS NOT A STUDENT OF OUR TWO SCHOOLS.

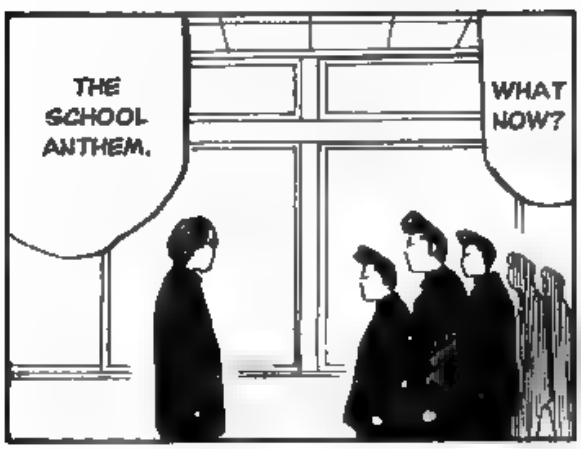
THAT'S EXACTLY MY POINT!
THE GORILLA'S A STUDENT HERE, RIGHT?
YEAH, BUT STILL...
THEY WOULD-N'T JUST BELIEVE US, HUH?
HUH. THAT'S GONNA BE KIND OF DIFFICULT.
IF WE AGREE NOT TO RECRUIT OUTSIDE THE CROMARTIE STUDENT BODY, IT WILL BE FINE TO ASK THE GORILLA'S HELP ONCE WE'VE ACTUALLY **PROVEN** HE'S A STUDENT.
EXACTLY. IF A STUDENT IS UNDULY ABSENT FROM SCHOOL, HE OR SHE WILL BE SUMMARILY DISMISSED.
YOU'RE TALKIN' ABOUT TRU-ANCY, RIGHT?
I SUGGEST WE PROCEED FROM THE UNDERSTANDING THAT BEING A HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENT MEANS ATTENDING SCHOOL ON A REGULAR BASIS.
OH, I GET IT.
[illegible] CONSIDER HIM YOUR BASELINE EXAMPLE.
ALLOW ME TO PRESENT NISHI-KUN, WHO IS WIDELY CRITICIZED AS "THE BIGGEST IDIOT AT OUR SCHOOL."
Nishi


UH...I DON'T REALLY REMEMBER. ONCE OR TWICE, I GUESS.


MY FIRST QUESTION: NISHI-KUN, HOW MANY TIMES A WEEK DO YOU ATTEND SCHOOL?

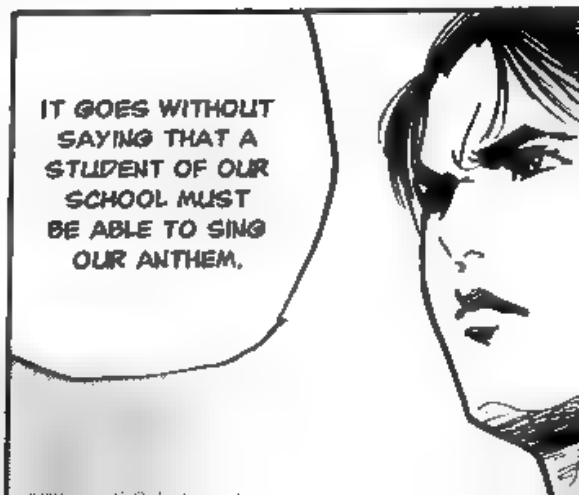
SO THEN...

HE'S HERE EVERY DAY.
WHAT ABOUT THE GO-RILLA?


THE SCHOOL ANTHEM.
WHAT NOW?

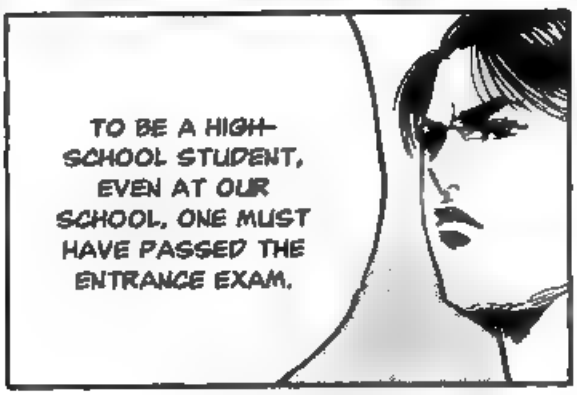
OH, OK. SO HE WINS THAT ONE.
YES. THE GORILLA HAS A BETTER ATTENDANCE RECORD THAN NISHI-KUN.

OF COURSE NOT. HE'S A GORILLA.
SO... CAN THE GORILLA SING IT?


IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT A STUDENT OF OUR SCHOOL MUST BE ABLE TO SING OUR ANTHEM.

UH...
WHAT ABOUT YOU, NISHI? CAN YOU SING THE SCHOOL ANTHEM?
SO WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE US?
IT'S A TIE. THE GORILLA IS STILL IN THE CLEAR.
WHAT'S AN "ANTHEM"?
DUDE, YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THE WORD MEANS?!
HEY, NISHI. HAVE YOU EVER STUDIED FOR SOMETHING?
NAH. I AIN'T NEVER OPENED MY TEXTBOOKS.
NEXT UP IS STUDY. IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT A HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENT IS EXPECTED TO DO A GOOD DEAL OF STUDYING.
WHAT ABOUT THE GORILLA?
I DON'T EVEN RE- [redacted] EVER SITTIN' AT MY DESK.
MAN, YOU'RE SOMETHIN' ELSE.

ALRIGHT! THE GORILLA WINS THIS ONE, TOO!
ACTUALLY, HE'S SITTING AT A DESK RIGHT NOW.

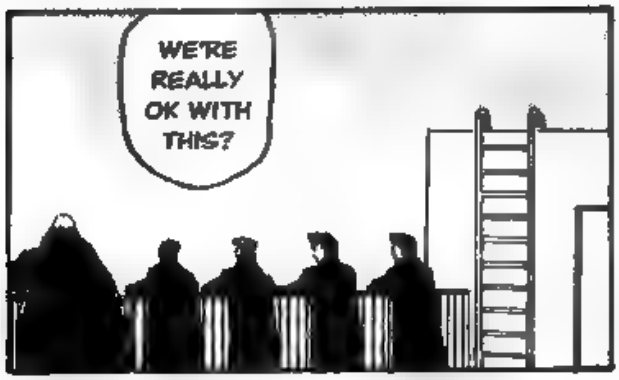

TO BE A HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENT, EVEN AT OUR SCHOOL, ONE MUST HAVE PASSED THE ENTRANCE EXAM.

NOW IT'S TIME FOR THE FINAL QUESTION.
NOW WHAT?

YEAH, I BET YOUR NAME'S ABOUT ALL YOU WRITE...
For some reason.
I THINK I WROTE MY NAME ON SOMETHIN' ONCE, THOUGH.

UH, I'M KINDA HAZY ON THAT.
NISHI, DO YOU REMEMBER HAVING TAKEN THIS EXAM?

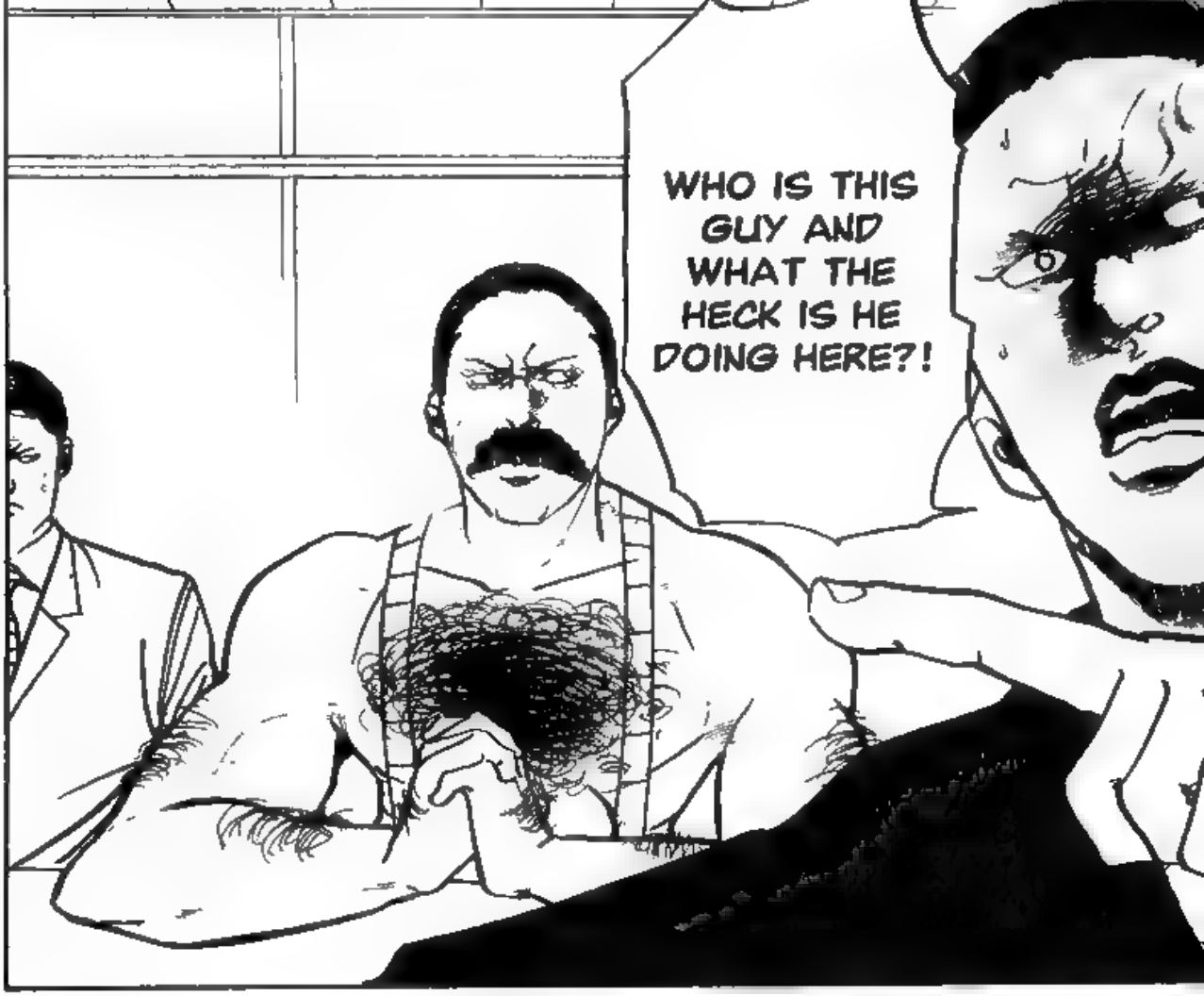
INDEED.
IF YOU'RE GONNA CALL YOURSELF A HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENT, YOU GOTTA AT LEAST BE ABLE TO WRITE YOUR NAME, HUH?
SO THAT'S WHAT IT COMES DOWN TO.
LET'S FIND OUT.
CAN HE DO IT?
HE CAN'T DO IT!
SKRCCHH
HUH?
WAIT A MINUTE.
I GUESS WE CAN'T USE HIM THEN.
STILL, IT WAS KINDA UNREASONABLE TO EXPECT A GORILLA TO WRITE HIS NAME.

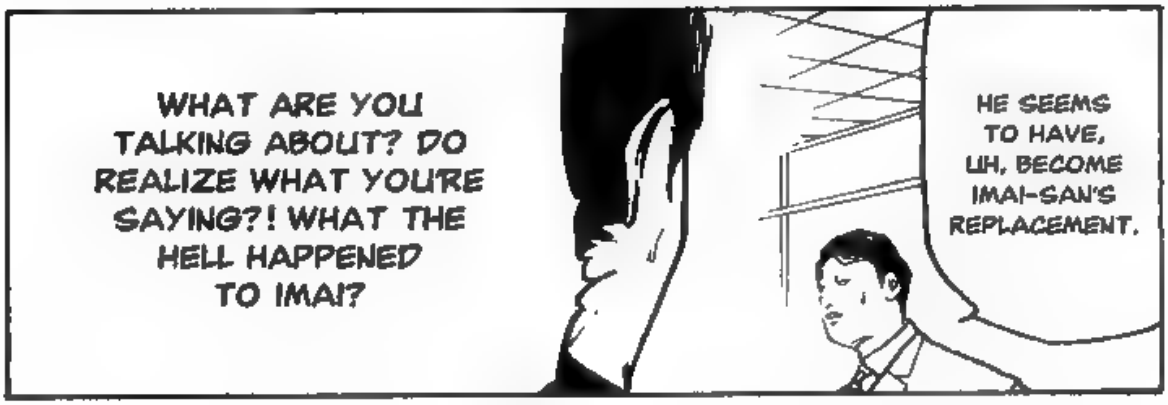


HAYASHIDA CAN READ KANJI?

CHAPTER 158: **YOU WON'T SEE ME**

FOR US BUSINESSMEN, THE WORD "STABILITY" NO LONGER HAS ANY MEANING!
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE THE WHISPERINGS OF THE HEISEI [redacted] FIRST BEGAN.


WHO IS THIS GUY AND WHAT THE HECK IS HE DOING HERE?!

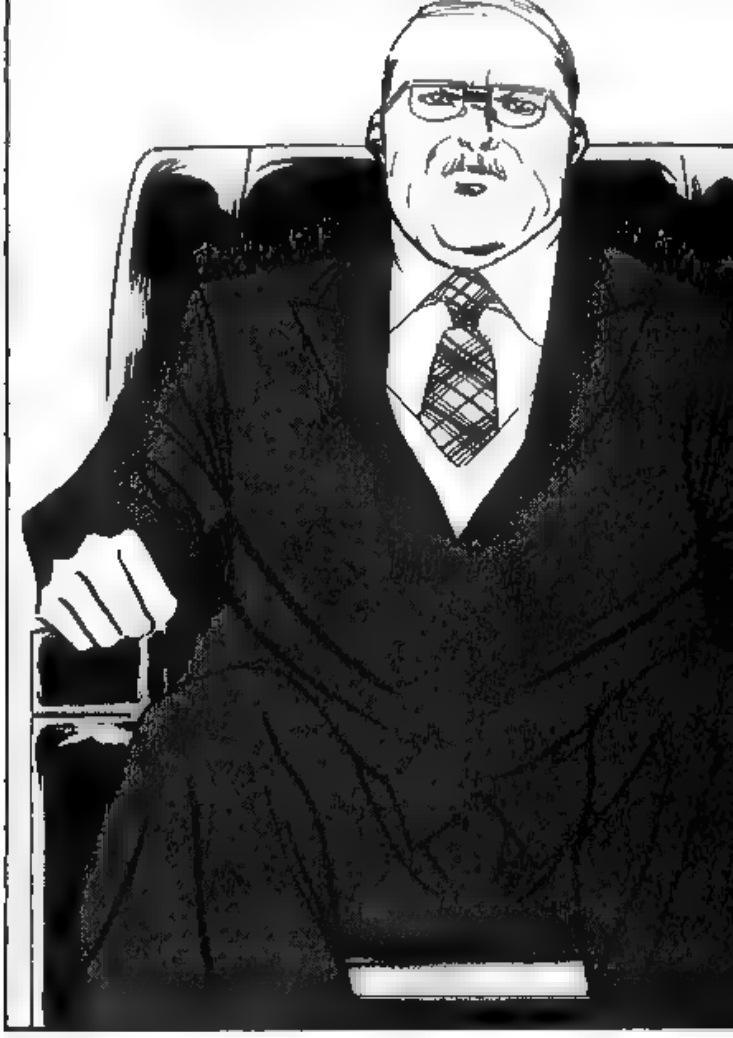

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? DO REALIZE WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?! WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED TO IMAI?
HE SEEMS TO HAVE, UH, BECOME IMAI-SAN'S REPLACEMENT.

HE'S ALREADY SAID HE WON'T SPEAK TO ANYONE BUT THE PERSON IN CHARGE OF HIS ACCOUNT, AND THAT'S IMAI! SO IF IMAI ISN'T HERE, IT'S ALL OVER! SIPIN WILL CANCEL ITS CONTRACT WITH US.
LISTEN TO ME VERY CAREFULLY. THE PRESIDENT OF SIPIN TRADING HIMSELF IS SITTING IN THE NEXT ROOM. HE WAS SO UPSET OVER OUR PREVIOUS BLUNDER THAT HE CAME DOWN HERE IN PERSON.

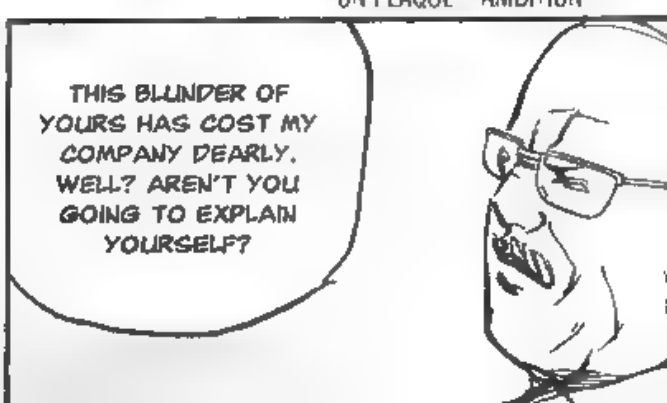
YOU KNOW, YOU'RE RIGHT. IF YOU SEE HIM FROM A DISTANCE, HE DOES LOOK A LITTLE LIKE IMAI.
BUT DON'T YOU THINK HE SORT OF LOOKS LIKE IMAI? IF YOU LOOK TOO CLOSELY YOU'LL SEE THEY'RE, UH, COMPLETELY DIFFERENT, BUT...
I'M VERY SORRY, SIR. IT WAS THE ONLY THING I COULD THINK OF.
BUT THAT'S NOT THE PROBLEM HERE, IS IT?! WE NEED THE REAL IMAI OR WE'RE FINISHED!
YES, SIR. IT WOULD PROBABLY BE NO DIFFERENT IF I PUT ON A MUSTACHE MYSELF.
EVERYTHING ELSE ABOUT THEM IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT!
I MEAN, THE ONLY THING THEY HAVE IN COMMON IS THAT MUSTACHE!
WELL, FIRST WE GET A MASK AND SOME SURGICAL GAUZE. THEN...
WHAT?
AH! I JUST HAD A GREAT IDEA!

HEY, NOT BAD!
IF WE DO SOMETHING LIKE THIS, THOUGH, NO WAY YOU COULD TELL HE'S NOT REALLY IMAI-SAN.
YEAH, THAT'S TRUE.
IF YOU HAVE TO PUT ALL THAT ON THE GUY, YOU COULD JUST AS EASILY PUT IT ON ME AND THE EFFECT WOULD BE THE SAME.
WAIT A MINUTE.
WELL, LET'S AT LEAST GIVE HIM A NECKTIE.
THERE'S NO WAY WE COULD GET A SUIT THAT WOULD FIT HIM IN TIME, THOUGH.
[redacted] NEED TO GET HIM INTO A BUSINESS SUIT.
MORE TO THE POINT, WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT HIS CLOTHES.

WHAT'S THAT?
WAIT, I THINK YOU'RE FORGETTING THE MOST IMPORTANT THING HERE.
HMM. I'D SAY IT LOOKS RATHER STRANGE.
HOW'S THAT?
OH, THAT'S RIGHT! WHAT ON EARTH CAME OVER US?
THIS ISN'T IMAI-SAN.
I UNDERSTAND YOU'RE ALL FEELING THE NEED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE SITUATION, BUT THE FACT REMAINS...
THERE'S ONLY ONE THING WE CAN DO--IF IMAI IS THE ONLY PERSON HE'LL SPEAK TO, WE'LL JUST HAVE TO TAKE THIS GUY INTO THE CONFERENCE ROOM AND PRETEND HE'S IMAI, BUT WE SHOULD BE PREPARED FOR THE WORST.
AAAGH, WHAT SHOULD WE DO?! THE PRESIDENT OF SIPIN IS WAITING FOR HIM IN THE NEXT ROOM!
CONFERENCE ROOM
THE FUTURE OF OUR COMPANY, HUH?
WE'RE OUT OF OPTIONS. THE FUTURE OF OUR COMPANY IS RIDING ON THIS MAN!



*ON PLAQUE "AMBITION"



. . . . . .
DON'T TELL ME YOU CAME HERE WITHOUT A SINGLE EXCUSE FOR WHAT HAPPENED!
AARGH, THIS ISN'T GOING TO WORK!
. . . . . .
DO YOU PLAN ON JUST SITTING THERE MUTE FOR THIS ENTIRE MEETING?
THESE DAYS, FAR TOO MANY OF YOUR PEERS TRY TO COVER THEIR MISTAKES WITH RIDICULOUS EXCUSES. I'D JUST ABOUT HAD IT WITH THE LOT OF YOU.
HUH?
EXCEL-LENT! WELL DONE, INDEED.
I TELL YOU, IT'S A BREATH OF FRESH AIR TO FIND SOMEONE WHO SIMPLY ACKNOWLEDGES HIS WRONGDOINGS IN SILENCE. IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I'VE SEEN HIS TYPE. I'M SURE HE'S A HARD AND CAPABLE WORKER...

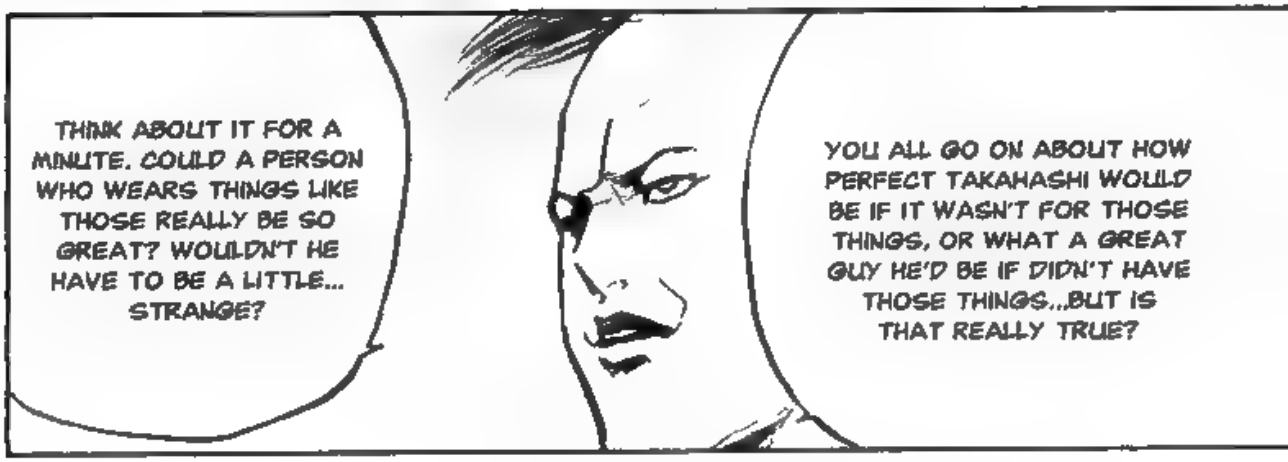
DROP ME A LINE IF YOU'D LIKE TO SEE THE ADVENTURES OF FREDDIE IN THE CORPORATE WORLD.

CHAPTER 159: **PERFECT STRANGER**

ALRIGHT, I KNOW WHAT TO DO. JUST LEAVE EVERYTHING TO ME.
coffee
YOU SAID IT.
THAT TAKA-HASHI SURE IS COOL.
NAH, THERE'S NOTHING TO BE SORRY ABOUT.
I'M SORRY, MAN. I OWE YOU.
IF ONLY HE DIDN'T HAVE THOSE... **THINGS**.

HUH?
WAIT A MINUTE.

YEAH. THOSE THINGS.
IT'S SUCH A SHAME. THE MAN WOULD BE PERFECT IF IT WASN'T FOR THOSE THINGS.

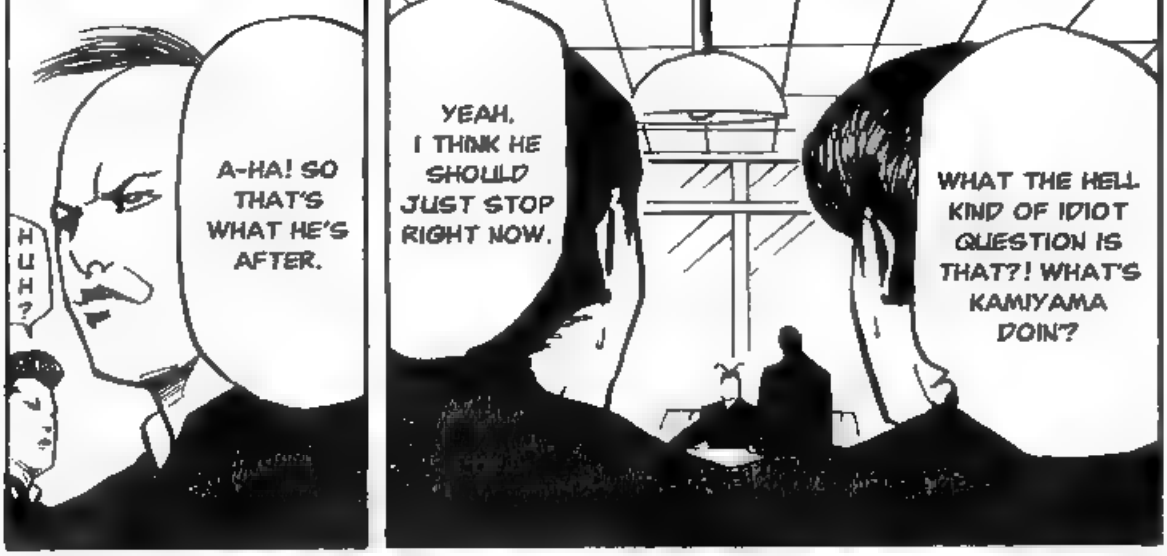

THINK ABOUT IT FOR A MINUTE. COULD A PERSON WHO WEARS THINGS LIKE THOSE REALLY BE SO GREAT? WOULDN'T HE HAVE TO BE A LITTLE... STRANGE?
YOU ALL GO ON ABOUT HOW PERFECT TAKAHASHI WOULD BE IF IT WASN'T FOR THOSE THINGS, OR WHAT A GREAT GUY HE'D BE IF DIDN'T HAVE THOSE THINGS...BUT IS THAT REALLY TRUE?

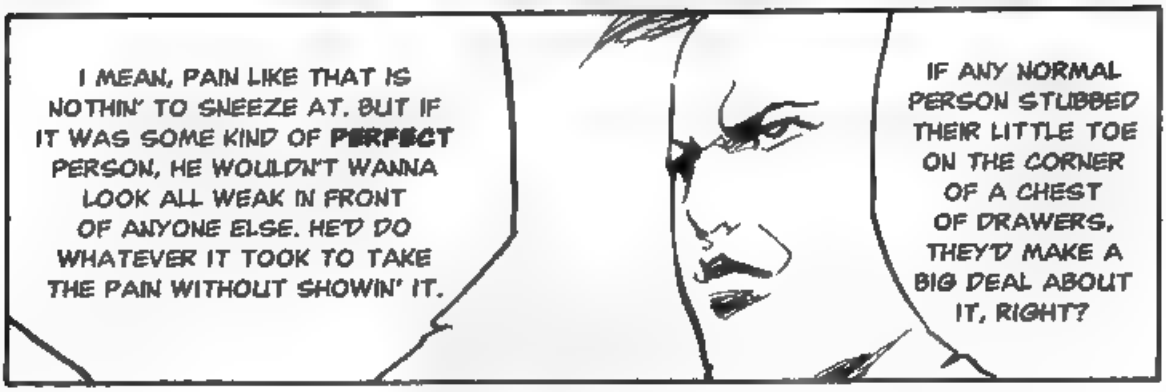
YOU SEE?! YOU'RE ALL BEIN' SUCKERED IN! THE **IMPACT** OF THOSE THINGS IS SO GREAT THAT, BY COMPARISON, EVERYTHING ELSE ABOUT TAKAHASHI STARTS LOOKIN' PRETTY NORMAL!
I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT. I MEAN, NO NORMAL GUY WOULD WANT TO PUT THOSE ON.

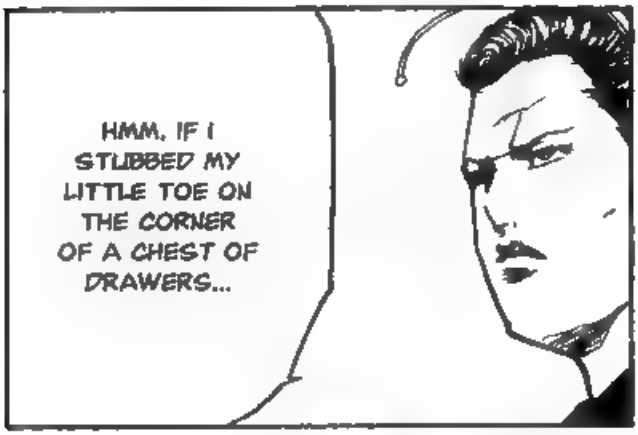
I, TOO, BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE PAID SO MUCH ATTENTION TO THOSE THINGS THAT WE HAVE GIVEN VERY LITTLE SCRUTINY TO TAKAHASHI-SAN HIMSELF. WE NEED TO PUT ASIDE HIS THINGS FOR THE MOMENT AND REEVALUATE TAKAHASHI-SAN AS A PERSON, *SANS* THINGS.

HUH? HEY, IT'S KAMIYAMA.
INDEED.

YEAH, THAT MAKES SENSE. STILL, GETTIN' A GOOD, LONG LOOK AT SOMETHING LIKE THAT IS GONNA BE DIFFICULT. DO YOU THINK WE CAN DO IT?
IS TAKAHASHI-SAN REALLY SUCH A PERFECT INDIVIDUAL? THE TIME HAS COME FOR US TO TAKE A GOOD, LONG LOOK AT WHAT KIND OF PERSON HE TRULY IS.
QUES-TIONS?
LEAVE IT TO ME. I HAVE A FEW QUESTIONS TO ASK HIM.
THERE IS SOMETHING I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU, POINT-BLANK.
HM?
EXCUSE ME.
THE CORNER OF A CHEST OF DRAWERS?
WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU ACCIDENTALLY STUB YOUR LITTLE TOE ON THE CORNER OF A CHEST OF DRAWERS?


HUH?
A-HA! SO THAT'S WHAT HE'S AFTER.
YEAH. I THINK HE SHOULD JUST STOP RIGHT NOW.
WHAT THE HELL KIND OF IDIOT QUESTION IS THAT?! WHAT'S KAMIYAMA DOIN'?

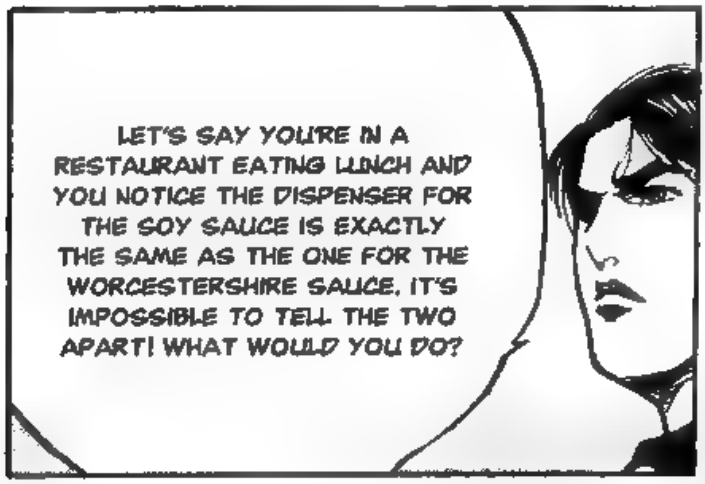

I MEAN, PAIN LIKE THAT IS NOTHIN' TO SNEEZE AT. BUT IF IT WAS SOME KIND OF **PERFECT** PERSON, HE WOULDN'T WANNA LOOK ALL WEAK IN FRONT OF ANYONE ELSE. HE'D DO WHATEVER IT TOOK TO TAKE THE PAIN WITHOUT SHOWIN' IT.
IF ANY NORMAL PERSON STUBBED THEIR LITTLE TOE ON THE CORNER OF A CHEST OF DRAWERS, THEY'D MAKE A BIG DEAL ABOUT IT, RIGHT?


HMM. IF I STUBBED MY LITTLE TOE ON THE CORNER OF A CHEST OF DRAWERS...

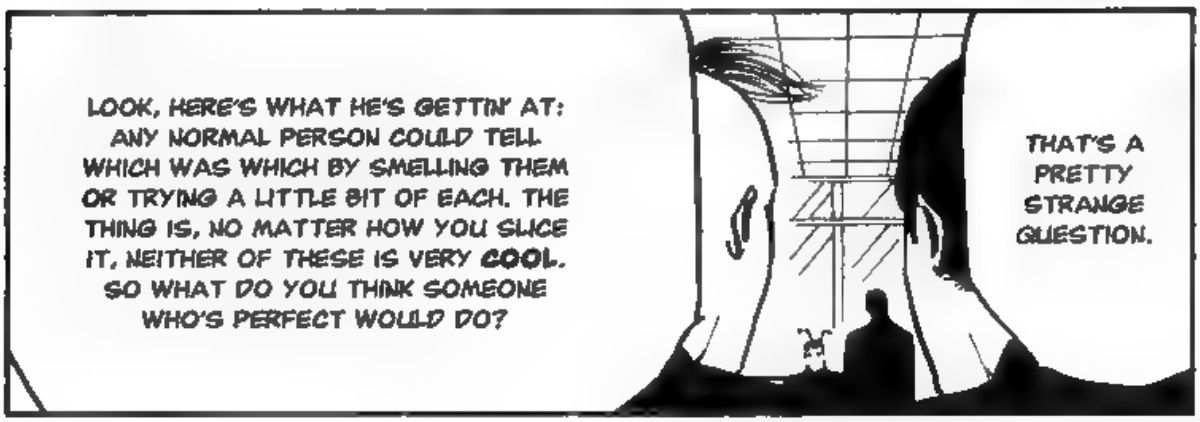
THAT'S RIGHT.
OH, I GET IT! THIS [redacted] WILL SHOW [redacted] TAKAHASHI-SAN REALLY IS PERFECT OR NOT!

H-HE **IS** PERFECT!
I GUESS THE FIRST THING I'D DO IS JUST DEAL WITH IT. THEN I'D GO SOMEWHERE THERE WAS NO ONE ELSE AROUND SO I COULD LET MY GUARD DOWN A BIT AND SHOW HOW MUCH IT REALLY HURT.

SO NOT ONLY WOULD HE DEAL WITH IT, HE'D GO SOMEWHERE THERE WAS NO ONE ELSE AROUND BEFORE HE'D EVEN SHOW THAT IT HURT. THAT'S TAKAHASHI-SAN FOR YOU, ALRIGHT. EVERYBODY FEELS PAIN, NO MATTER HOW GREAT THEY ARE, BUT HIS APPROACH IS SO RATIONAL... YEAH, HIS ANSWER WAS A LOT MORE THAN I WAS EXPECTING. TAKAHASHI-SAN REALLY CAN BE CALLED PERFECT. HE'S THE REAL DEAL!
DID YOU HEAR THAT JUST NOW, HAYA-SHIDA?!


LET'S SAY YOU'RE IN A RESTAURANT EATING LUNCH AND YOU NOTICE THE DISPENSER FOR THE SOY SAUCE IS EXACTLY THE SAME AS THE ONE FOR THE WORCESTERSHIRE SAUCE. IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO TELL THE TWO APART! WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

OK.
I HAVE ANOTHER QUES-TION.


LOOK, HERE'S WHAT HE'S GETTIN' AT: ANY NORMAL PERSON COULD TELL WHICH WAS WHICH BY SMELLING THEM OR TRYING A LITTLE BIT OF EACH. THE THING IS, NO MATTER HOW YOU SLICE IT, NEITHER OF THESE IS VERY COOL. SO WHAT DO YOU THINK SOMEONE WHO'S PERFECT WOULD DO?
THAT'S A PRETTY STRANGE QUESTION.

THEY WOULDN'T CARE WHICH WAS WHICH.

I-I DON'T KNOW! WHAT WOULD THEY DO?

HMM. IF I COULDN'T TELL THEM APART...
LOOK! HE'S ABOUT TO ANSWER!

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT PERFECT, BUT IT MAKES HIM A MAN!
HEY, YEAH! WAIT, AND THAT MAKES SOMEONE PERFECT?

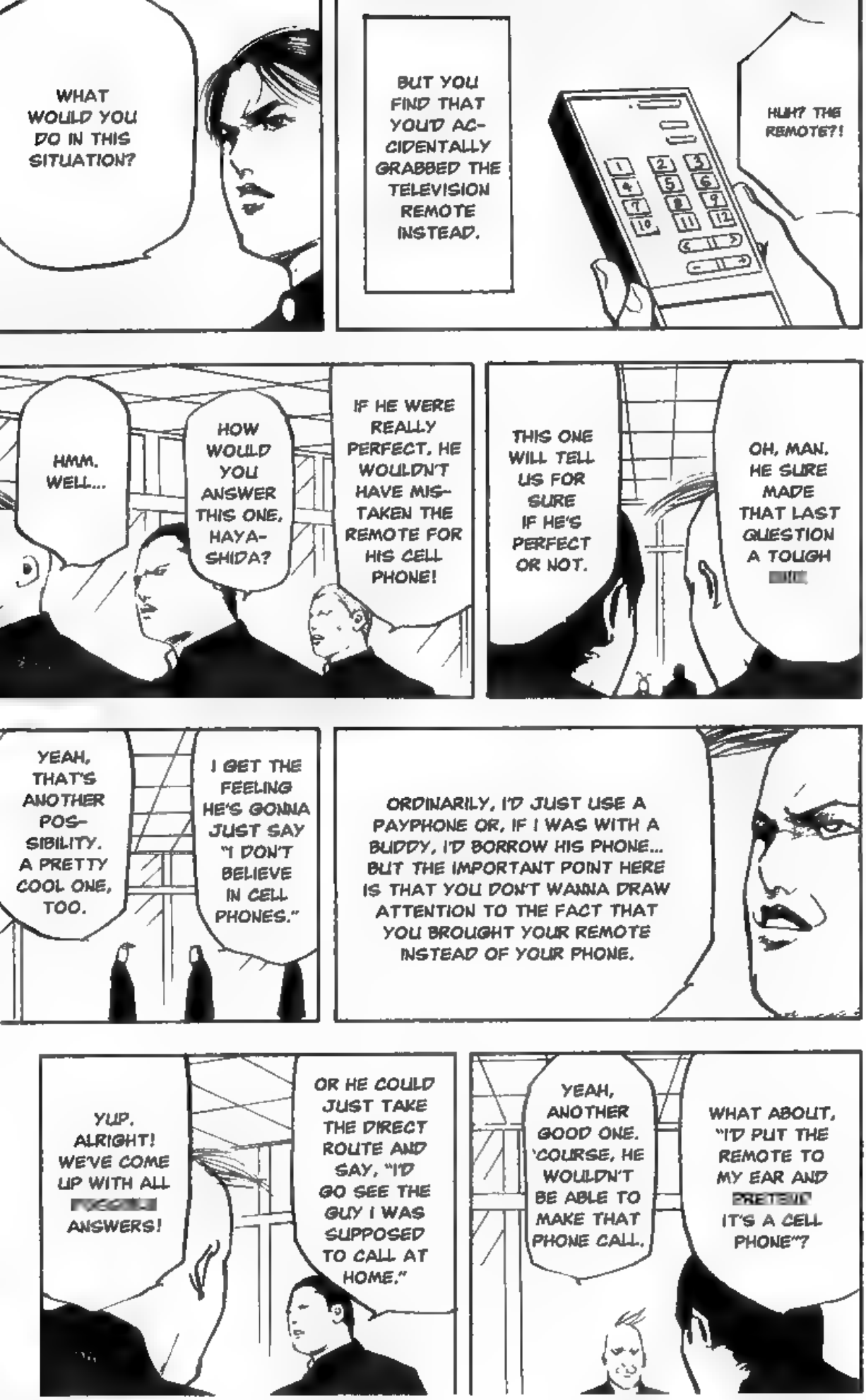
WHOA! HE WENT A DIFFERENT ROUTE ALTOGETHER!
I'D ASK SOMEONE WHO WORKED THERE.

OK.
VERY WELL. I HAVE ONE FINAL QUESTION.

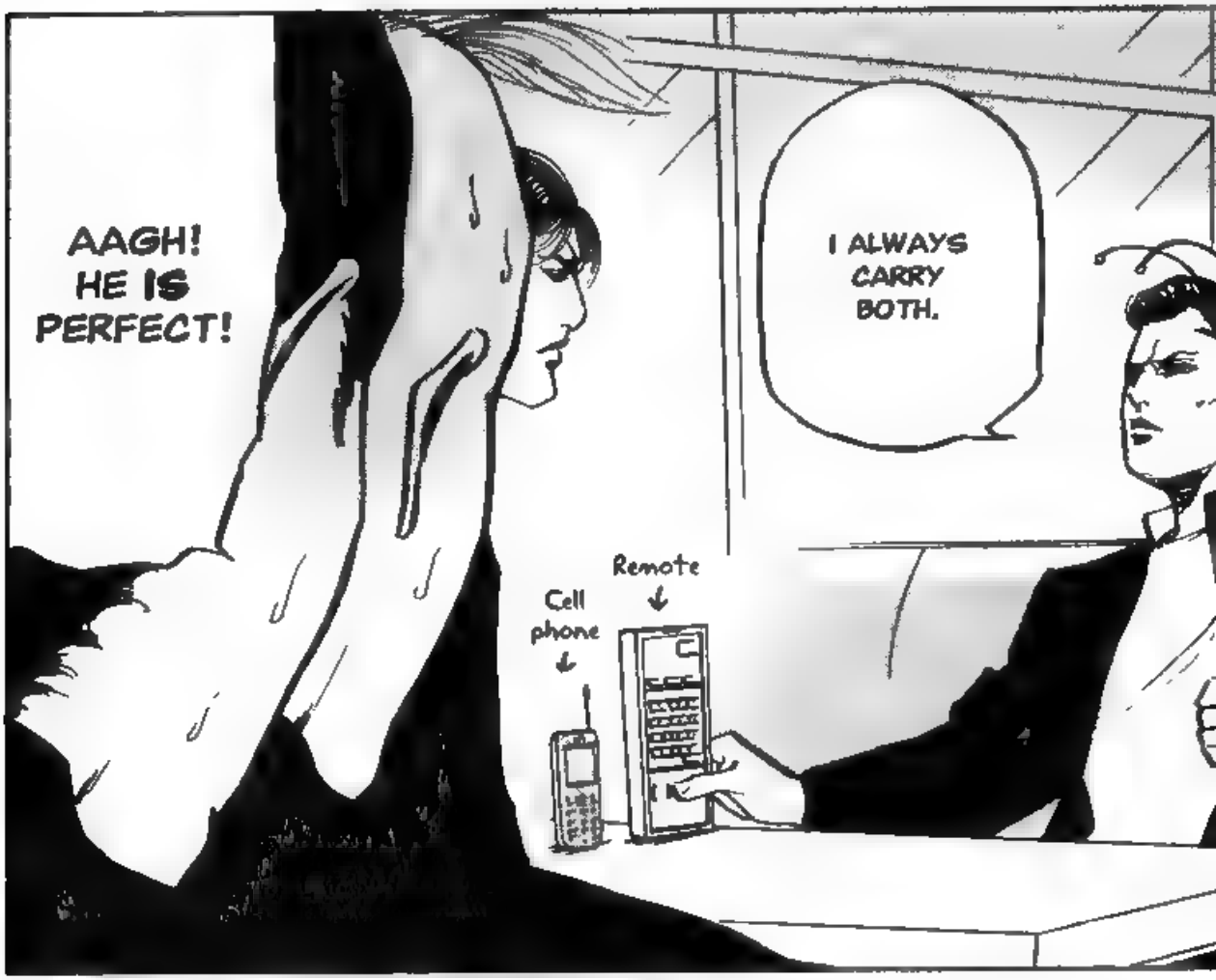
YEAH. HIS ANSWERS HAVE ALL BEEN WAY BEYOND WHAT I EXPECTED. THIS IS NO ORDINARY GUY!
I GOTTA TELL YOU, THIS GUY'S SO PERFECT, HE'S... HE'S ULTRA PERFECT!

YOU GO TO PULL YOUR CELL PHONE OUT OF YOUR POCKET...
LET'S SEE.

OH! I HAVE TO CALL SATO-SAN.
YOU'RE WALKING DOWN THE STREET WHEN YOU SUDDENLY REMEMBER THAT YOU HAVE TO MAKE A PHONE CALL.


WHAT WOULD YOU DO IN THIS SITUATION?
BUT YOU FIND THAT YOU'D ACCIDENTALLY GRABBED THE TELEVISION REMOTE INSTEAD.
HUH? THE REMOTE?!
HMM. WELL...
HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER THIS ONE, HAYASHIDA?
IF HE WERE REALLY PERFECT, HE WOULDN'T HAVE MISTAKEN THE REMOTE FOR HIS CELL PHONE!
THIS ONE WILL TELL US FOR SURE IF HE'S PERFECT OR NOT.
OH, MAN. HE SURE MADE THAT LAST QUESTION A TOUGH [redacted]
YEAH, THAT'S ANOTHER POSSIBILITY. A PRETTY COOL ONE, TOO.
I GET THE FEELING HE'S GONNA JUST SAY "I DON'T BELIEVE IN CELL PHONES."
ORDINARILY, I'D JUST USE A PAYPHONE OR, IF I WAS WITH A BUDDY, I'D BORROW HIS PHONE... BUT THE IMPORTANT POINT HERE IS THAT YOU DON'T WANNA DRAW ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT YOU BROUGHT YOUR REMOTE INSTEAD OF YOUR PHONE.
YUP. ALRIGHT! WE'VE COME UP WITH ALL [redacted] ANSWERS!
OR HE COULD JUST TAKE THE DIRECT ROUTE AND SAY, "I'D GO SEE THE GUY I WAS SUPPOSED TO CALL AT HOME."
YEAH, ANOTHER GOOD ONE. 'COURSE, HE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO MAKE THAT PHONE CALL.
WHAT ABOUT, "I'D PUT THE REMOTE TO MY EAR AND [redacted] IT'S A CELL PHONE"?

THERE'S NO WAY HIS ANSWER COULD BE MORE PERFECT THAN ANY OF OURS!
LOOK, HE'S ABOUT TO SPEAK!

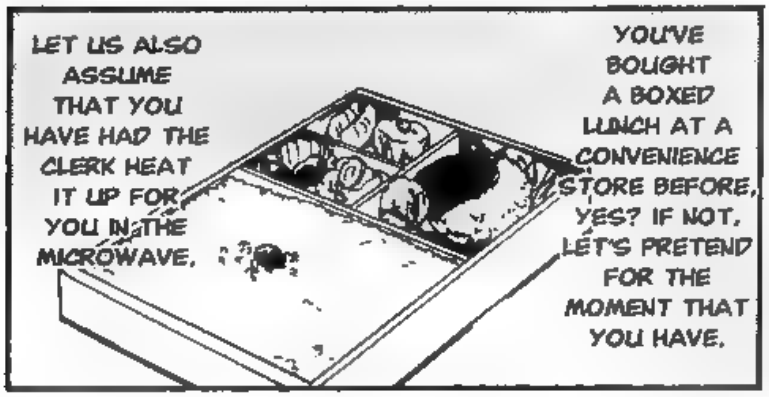

AAGH! HE IS PERFECT!
I ALWAYS CARRY BOTH.
Remote
Cell phone

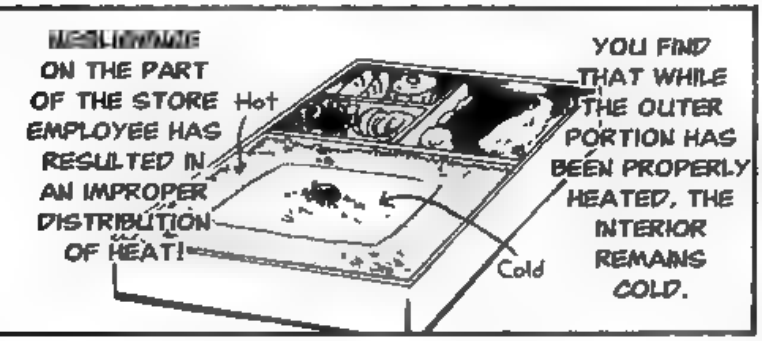
WHY WOULD HE CARRY BOTH?!
BUT...

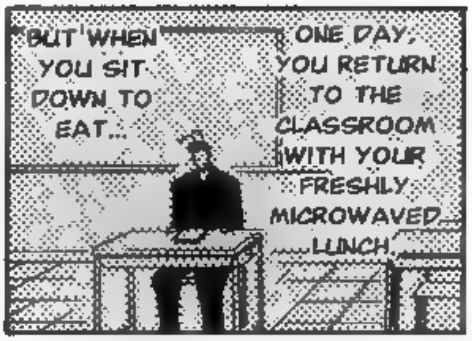
BEATS ME

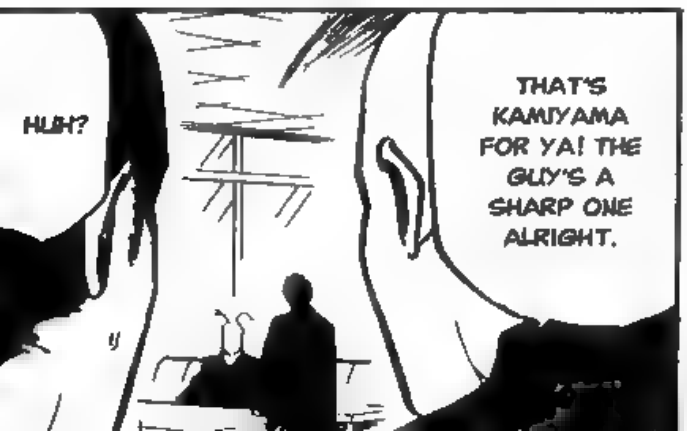
CHAPTER 160: **PERFECT WORLD**

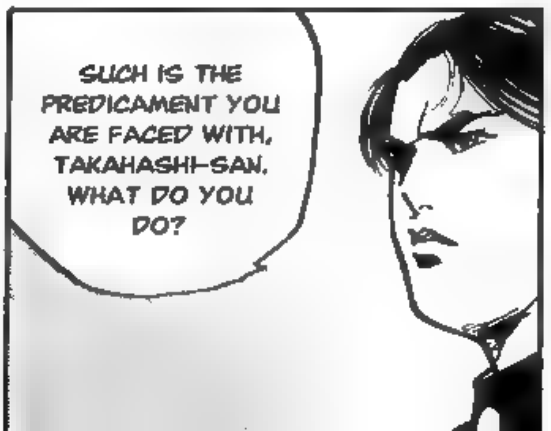
OK!
THIS GUY IS A TOUGH NUT TO CRACK. WE'RE COUNTIN' ON YA, KAMIYAMA!
CONTINUING FROM THE LAST CHAPTER WE CONTINUE TO EXPLORE WHETHER TAKAHASHI-SAN (AND HIS THINGS) REALLY IS PERFECT.

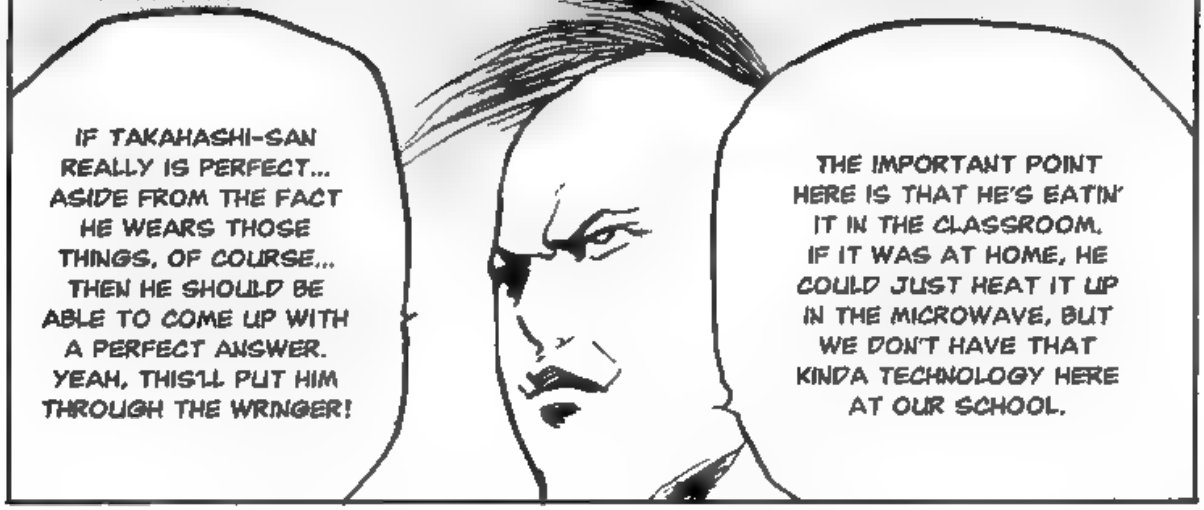

LET US ALSO ASSUME THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE CLERK HEAT IT UP FOR YOU IN THE MICROWAVE.
YOU'VE BOUGHT A BOXED LUNCH AT A CONVENIENCE STORE BEFORE, YES? IF NOT, LET'S PRETEND FOR THE MOMENT THAT YOU HAVE.

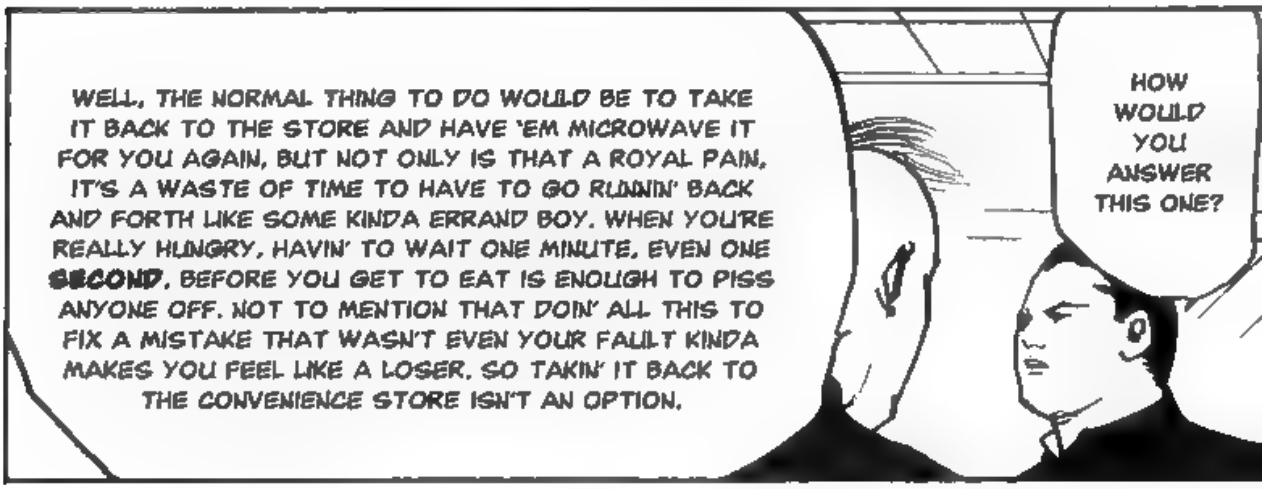

NEGLIGENCE
ON THE PART OF THE STORE EMPLOYEE HAS RESULTED IN AN IMPROPER DISTRIBUTION OF HEAT!
Hot
Cold
YOU FIND THAT WHILE THE OUTER PORTION HAS BEEN PROPERLY HEATED, THE INTERIOR REMAINS COLD.








IF TAKAHASHI-SAN REALLY IS PERFECT... ASIDE FROM THE FACT HE WEARS THOSE THINGS, OF COURSE... THEN HE SHOULD BE ABLE TO COME UP WITH A PERFECT ANSWER. YEAH, THIS'LL PUT HIM THROUGH THE WRINGER!
THE IMPORTANT POINT HERE IS THAT HE'S EATIN' IT IN THE CLASSROOM. IF IT WAS AT HOME, HE COULD JUST HEAT IT UP IN THE MICROWAVE, BUT WE DON'T HAVE THAT KINDA TECHNOLOGY HERE AT OUR SCHOOL.


WELL, THE NORMAL THING TO DO WOULD BE TO TAKE IT BACK TO THE STORE AND HAVE 'EM MICROWAVE IT FOR YOU AGAIN, BUT NOT ONLY IS THAT A ROYAL PAIN, IT'S A WASTE OF TIME TO HAVE TO GO RUNNIN' BACK AND FORTH LIKE SOME KINDA ERRAND BOY. WHEN YOU'RE REALLY HUNGRY, HAVIN' TO WAIT ONE MINUTE, EVEN ONE **SECOND**, BEFORE YOU GET TO EAT IS ENOUGH TO PISS ANYONE OFF. NOT TO MENTION THAT DOIN' ALL THIS TO FIX A MISTAKE THAT WASN'T EVEN YOUR FAULT KINDA MAKES YOU FEEL LIKE A LOSER. SO TAKIN' IT BACK TO THE CONVENIENCE STORE ISN'T AN OPTION.
HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER THIS ONE?

BUT RICE IS AT ITS MOST DELICIOUS WHEN IT'S BEEN **HEATED**. SO BITING THE BULLET AND EATIN' IT AS IS DOESN'T SEEM LIKE THE SMART WAY TO GO TO ME.
YEAH, YOU COULD.
YOU COULD ALWAYS JUST EAT IT AS IS.

YOU ONLY EAT THE PART THAT GOT HEATED.
I'D HAVE TO SAY...
SO WHAT DO YOU THINK WOULD BE THE PERFECT ANSWER?

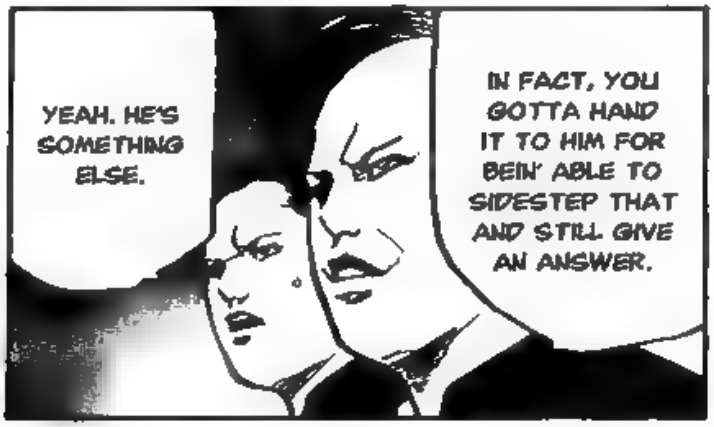
DUDE, HAVEN'T YOU EVER HEARD OF EATIN' IN MODERATION? ANY TIME YOU'VE EATEN AND YOU THINK YOU COULD HAVE JUST A LITTLE BIT MORE, IT'S BEST FOR YOUR STOMACH TO **NOT** EAT ANY MORE. NOT FRIGGIN PIGGING OUT EVERY TIME YOU SIT DOWN TO EAT IS ONE OF OUR BASIC HUMAN PHILOSOPHIES!
AND THAT'S PERFECT?
. . . . . .
ALRIGHT, TAKAHASHI-SAN! LET'S SEE IF YOU CAN COME UP WITH A BETTER REPLY THAN THAT!
RELAX. YOU TAKE 'EM HOME TO EAT LATER. THEY'LL STILL BE GOOD.
BUT WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THE LEFTOVERS? JUST THROWING THEM AWAY SOUNDS PRETTY IMMORAL TO ME.
HUH?!
I'D JUST EAT THE PARTS THAT WERE STILL COLD.
AH! THAT'S IT!
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN, HAYASHIDA?!
HE'D EAT... THE COLD PARTS?

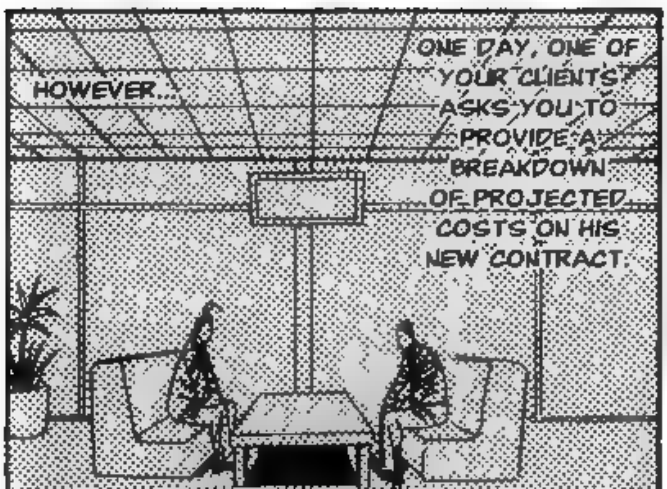
TAKAHASHI-SAN'S GOT A REALLY [redacted] TONGUE! HE CAN'T HAVE ANYTHING THAT'S TOO HOT!
OH, I GET IT!
PWFF
PWFF

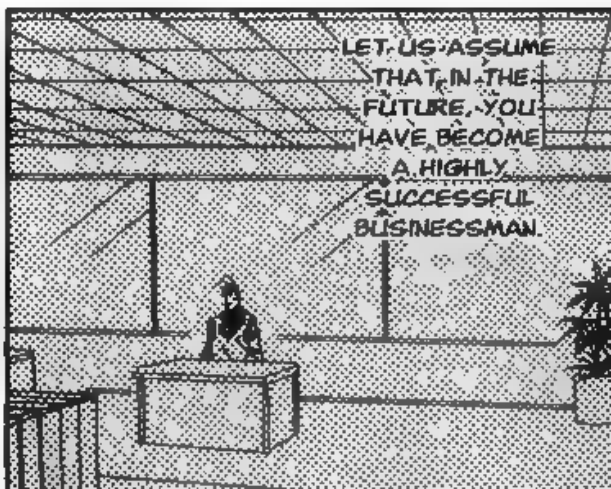
THAT WAS PART OF THE ORIGINAL [redacted] HE COULDN'T CHANGE THAT.
WHY'D HE GET HIS LUNCH MICRO-WAVED IN THE FIRST PLACE?

WAIT A MINUTE. IF HIS TONGUE IS THAT SENSITIVE...

SURE
MY NEXT QUES-TION.

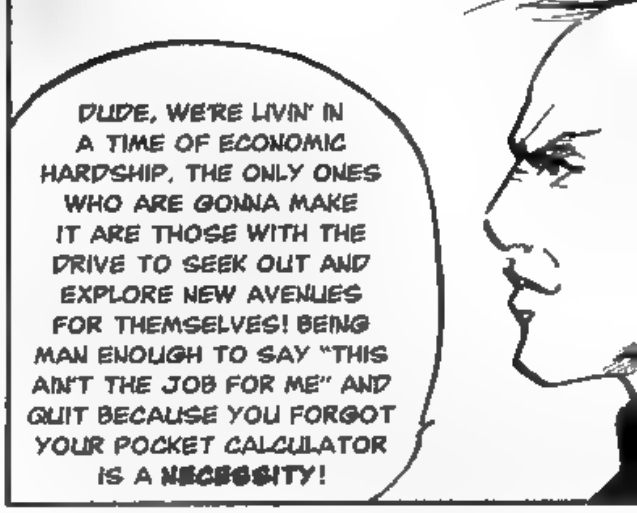

YEAH. HE'S SOMETHING ELSE.
IN FACT, YOU GOTTA HAND IT TO HIM FOR BEIN' ABLE TO SIDESTEP THAT AND STILL GIVE AN ANSWER.

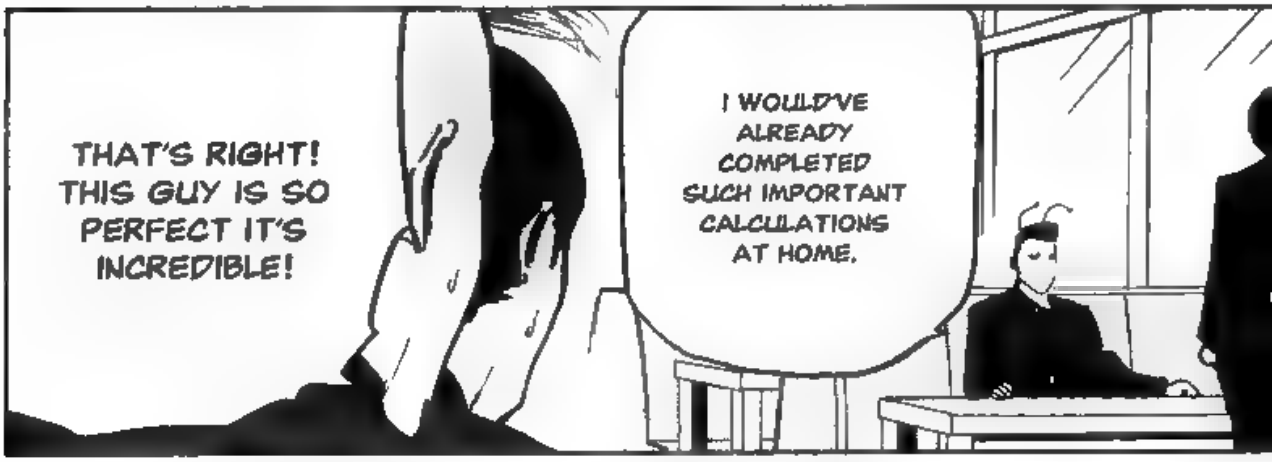

HOWEVER...
ONE DAY, ONE OF YOUR CLIENTS ASKS YOU TO PROVIDE A BREAKDOWN OF PROJECTED COSTS ON HIS NEW CONTRACT.

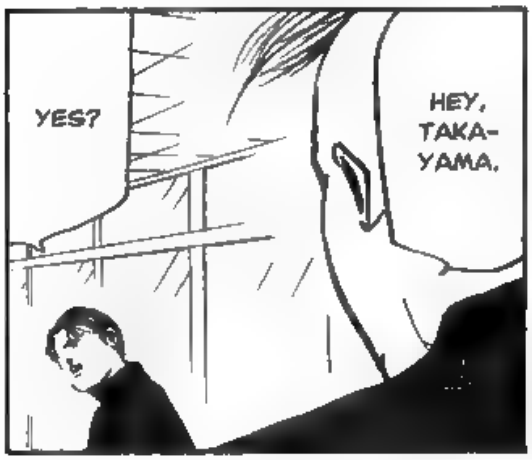

LET US ASSUME THAT IN THE FUTURE, YOU HAVE BECOME A HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMAN.

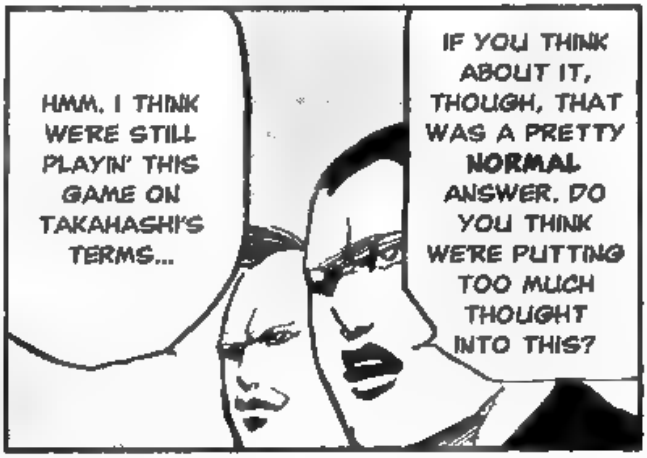
TAKAHASHI-SAN, HOW WOULD YOU OVERCOME THIS MOST PRECARIOUS OF HURDLES?
YOU FIND THAT YOU'VE LEFT YOUR POCKET CALCULATOR AT HOME.
GAH!
WELL, THE NORMAL APPROACH WOULD BE TO JUST BORROW A CALCULATOR FROM SOMEONE OR GO BUY ONE AT A CONVENIENCE STORE...BUT BOTH OF THOSE ARE GONNA MAKE YOU LOOK BAD IN FRONT OF YER CLIENT. NO PERFECT PERSON WOULD DO SOMETHIN' LIKE THAT.
SO, HOW WOULD YOU AN-SWER THAT?
IT CAN'T BE HELPED. YOUR STANDARD LINE OF QUESTIONING IS NEVER GONNA CRACK TAKAHASHI'S SHELL.
I GET THE FEELING HE'S MOVING AWAY FROM SCHOOL-RELATED QUESTIONS.
LISTEN, NO MATTER HOW PERFECT TAKAHASHI-SAN MAY BE, HE'S STILL A STUDENT AT THIS SCHOOL. THERE'S NO WAY HE CAN DO MATH IN HIS HEAD.
HE'D TRY TO DO ALL THE MATH IN HIS HEAD!
I'VE GOT IT!
WHAT?! HE'D QUIT?
HE'D FIND ANOTHER JOB.
WELL, WHAT DO YOU THINK HE'S GONNA SAY?

YEAH, THAT MAKES SENSE. I WONDER HOW HE'S GONNA ANSWER.
BESIDES, IT GIVES YOU THE CHANCE TO LAND A NEW JOB. IT'S A GREAT OPPORTUNITY!

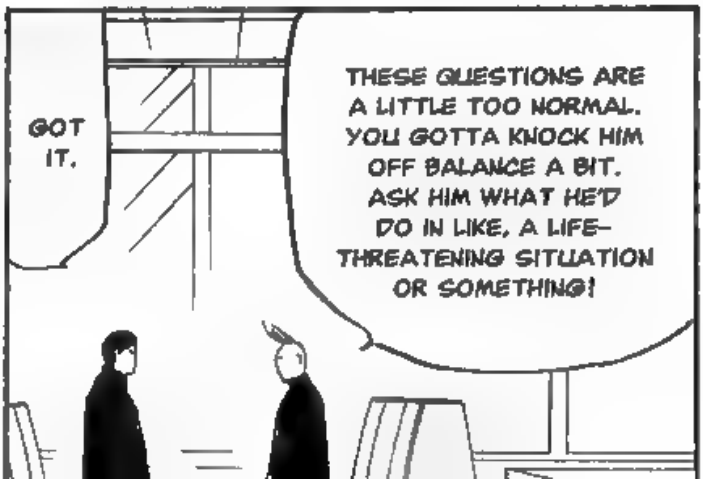

DUDE, WE'RE LIVIN' IN A TIME OF ECONOMIC HARDSHIP. THE ONLY ONES WHO ARE GONNA MAKE IT ARE THOSE WITH THE DRIVE TO SEEK OUT AND EXPLORE NEW AVENUES FOR THEMSELVES! BEING MAN ENOUGH TO SAY "THIS AIN'T THE JOB FOR ME" AND QUIT BECAUSE YOU FORGOT YOUR POCKET CALCULATOR IS A **NECESSITY**!

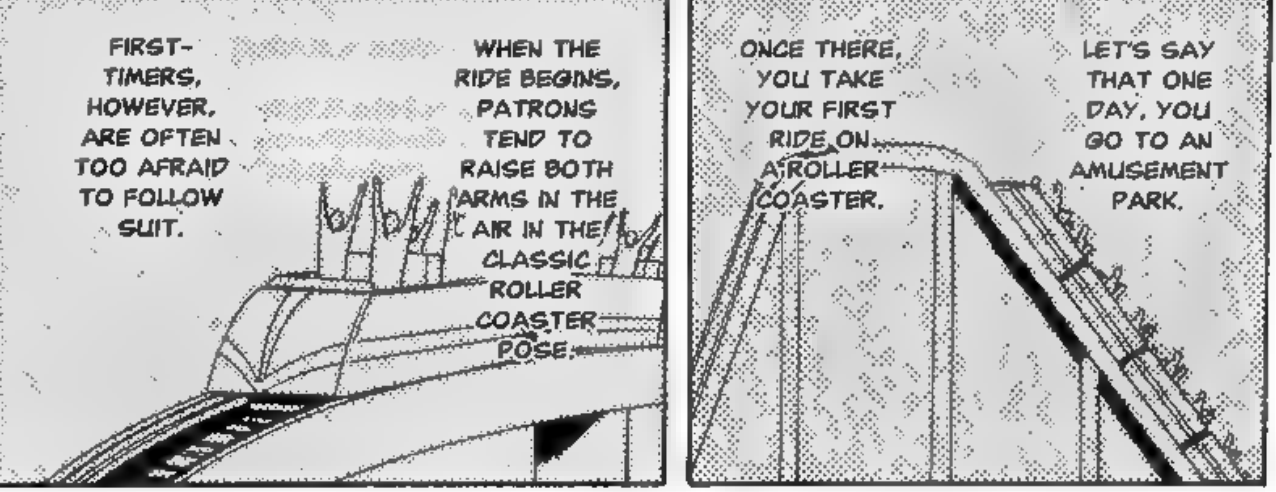

THAT'S RIGHT! THIS GUY IS SO PERFECT IT'S INCREDIBLE!
I WOULD'VE ALREADY COMPLETED SUCH IMPORTANT CALCULATIONS AT HOME.


YES?
HEY, TAKA-YAMA.

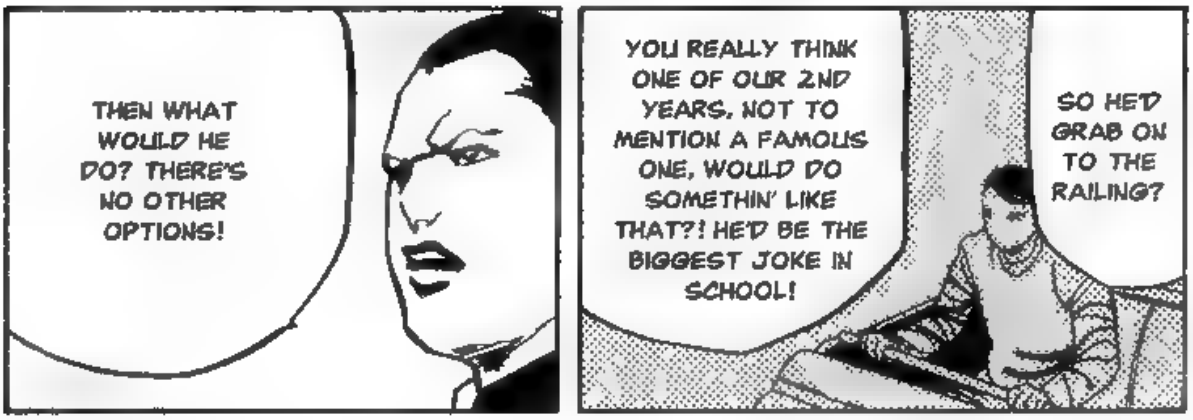

HMM. I THINK WE'RE STILL PLAYIN' THIS GAME ON TAKAHASHI'S TERMS...
IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT, THOUGH, THAT WAS A PRETTY **NORMAL** ANSWER. DO YOU THINK WE'RE PUTTING TOO MUCH THOUGHT INTO THIS?

GO AHEAD.
TAKAHASHI-SAN, DO YOU MIND IF I PRESENT YOU WITH A RATHER MORE CHALLENGING QUESTION?


GOT IT.
THESE QUESTIONS ARE A LITTLE TOO NORMAL. YOU GOTTA KNOCK HIM OFF BALANCE A BIT. ASK HIM WHAT HE'D DO IN LIKE, A LIFE-THREATENING SITUATION OR SOMETHING!


LET'S SAY THAT ONE DAY, YOU GO TO AN AMUSEMENT PARK.
ONCE THERE, YOU TAKE YOUR FIRST RIDE ON A ROLLER COASTER.
WHEN THE RIDE BEGINS, PATRONS TEND TO RAISE BOTH ARMS IN THE AIR IN THE CLASSIC ROLLER COASTER POSE.
FIRST-TIMERS, HOWEVER, ARE OFTEN TOO AFRAID TO FOLLOW SUIT.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?
. . . . . .
WHAT'S THE ANSWER?!
WELL, THE STANDARD ANSWER WOULD PROBABLY BE "I'D KEEP MY FEAR UNDER CONTROL AND PUT THOSE HANDS IN THE AIR," BUT THAT'S NOT RIGHT, EITHER. ROLLER COASTERS ARE PRETTY SCARY. I DON'T CARE HOW TOUGH A FIGHTER YOU ARE, THAT COASTER IS GONNA PUT SOME FEAR INTO YOU, ESPECIALLY IF IT'S THE FIRST TIME YOU'VE EVER RIDDEN ONE.


SO HE'D GRAB ON TO THE RAILING?
YOU REALLY THINK ONE OF OUR 2ND YEARS, NOT TO MENTION A FAMOUS ONE, WOULD DO SOMETHIN' LIKE THAT?! HE'D BE THE BIGGEST JOKE IN SCHOOL!
THEN WHAT WOULD HE DO? THERE'S NO OTHER OPTIONS!

EXACTLY. THIS QUESTION IS UNANSWERABLE!
WHAT?!
THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE HE WON'T BE ABLE TO ANSWER THIS ONE...WHICH MEANS WE'LL HAVE KNOCKED TAKAHASHI DOWN TO THE LEVEL OF A REGULAR DUDE!
I CAN'T IMAGINE HIM GOING DOWN THAT EASY, THOUGH!

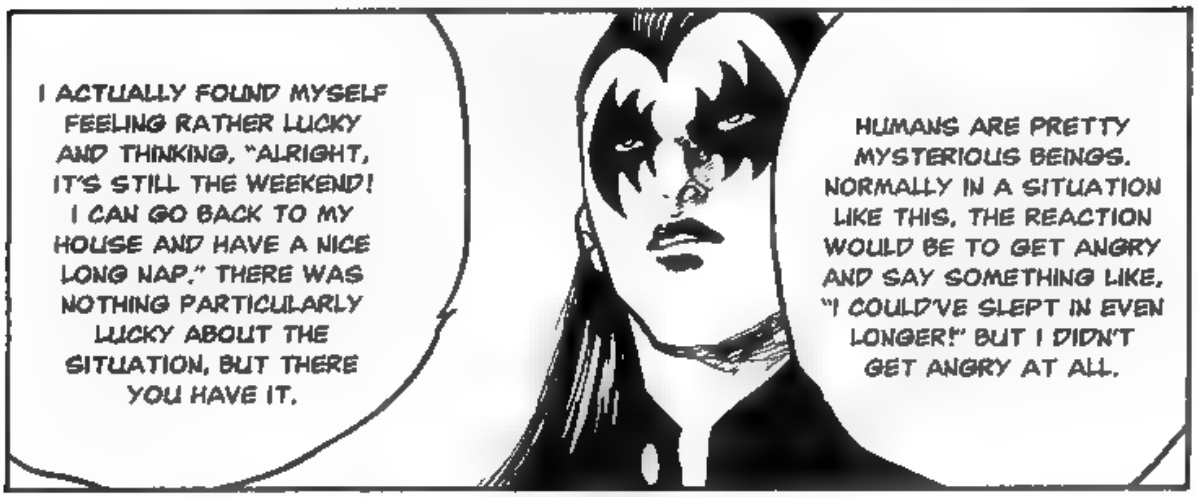
YUP, HE'S PERFECT.

CHAPTER 161: **HAPPY**

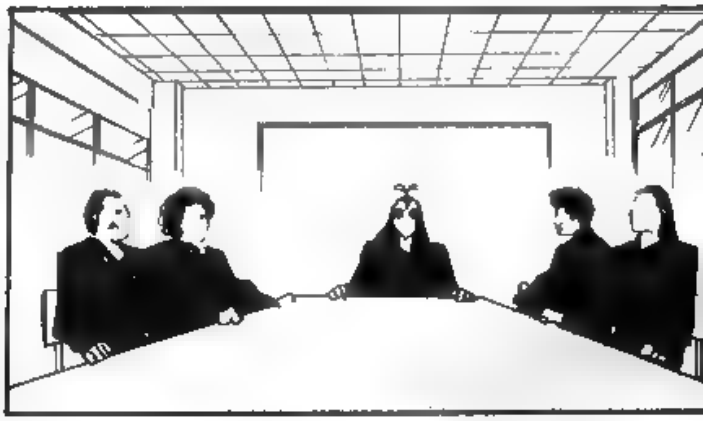
MUTTERING "THIS IS BAD. I'M GONNA BE LATE!" I QUICKLY CHANGED AND RAN OUT OF MY HOUSE.
MASARU IGA
LEADER OF THE FOUR GREAT ONES
A COUPLE DAYS AGO, I ACCIDENTALLY SLEPT IN LATER THAN USUAL.

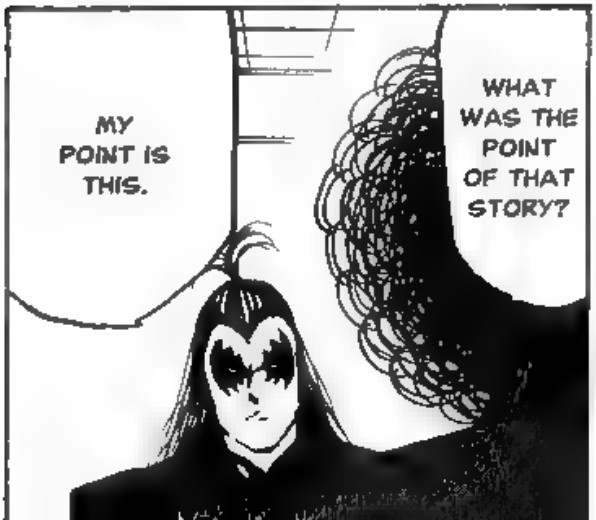
I TOOK A MOMENT TO THINK ABOUT IT RATIONALLY.
BUT ONCE I WAS OUTSIDE, I SAW THERE WAS HARDLY ANYONE ELSE AROUND. THE NORMAL CROWDS OF BUSINESSMEN WERE ALL GONE.

THAT'S WHEN I REALIZED IT WAS SUNDAY.


I ACTUALLY FOUND MYSELF FEELING RATHER LUCKY AND THINKING, "ALRIGHT, IT'S STILL THE WEEKEND! I CAN GO BACK TO MY HOUSE AND HAVE A NICE LONG NAP." THERE WAS NOTHING PARTICULARLY LUCKY ABOUT THE SITUATION, BUT THERE YOU HAVE IT.
HUMANS ARE PRETTY MYSTERIOUS BEINGS. NORMALLY IN A SITUATION LIKE THIS, THE REACTION WOULD BE TO GET ANGRY AND SAY SOMETHING LIKE, "I COULD'VE SLEPT IN EVEN LONGER!" BUT I DIDN'T GET ANGRY AT ALL.

HM?
CAN I ADD SOME-THING?



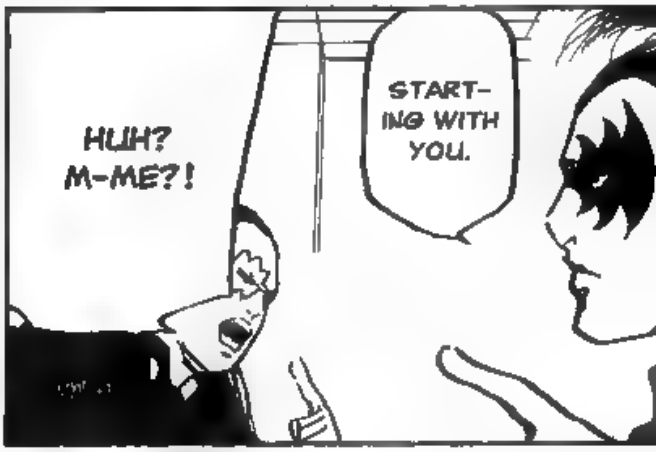

MY POINT IS THIS.
WHAT WAS THE POINT OF THAT STORY?

FIRST OFF, I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU MEAN. I'VE HAD THE SAME KIND OF EXPERIENCE BEFORE, TOO. BUT...

IF WE MADE MORE OF AN EFFORT TO SEEK THESE OUT, WOULDN'T WE BE ABLE TO LIVE MORE FULL AND FRUITFUL LIVES? ONCE THAT THOUGHT CAME INTO MY HEAD, I KNEW I WANTED YOU ALL TO GIVE IT A TRY AS WELL.
THE SIMPLE PLEASURES OF EVERYDAY LIFE...A CHANCE OCCURRENCE THAT BRINGS FEELINGS OF CONTENTMENT...
BASTARD! ALL I'M TRYING TO DO IS FIND A LITTLE MORE OF THE HAPPINESS IN LIFE!
WHY IS THIS STARTING TO FEEL LIKE A SELF-HELP SEMINAR?
WAIT A SECOND.
NO, IT FRICKIN' WAS NOT!
I MEAN, ISN'T THAT THE REASON WHY OUR GROUP WAS FORMED IN THE FIRST PLACE?
JEEZ! I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT'S WHAT ANYMORE!
OH, YEAH, THERE'S THAT.
WE CAME TOGETHER BECAUSE WE WANTED TO CREATE THE ULTIMATE FUSION OF ROCK AND [redacted]!

I KNOW THIS IS RATHER SUDDEN, BUT I'D LIKE YOU ALL TO SHARE AN EXAMPLE OF A SIMPLE KIND OF HAPPINESS THAT YOU'VE EXPERIENCED...
OK, FINE. WHY DON'T WE JUST MOVE ON?
SURE, WE INITIALLY CAME TOGETHER TO CREATE A FUSION OF ROCK AND BADASSNESS, BUT WHAT'S WRONG WITH ADDING SOME MORE, YOU KNOW, POSITIVE ELEMENTS INTO THE MIX?

IT WASN'T MUCH OF A PRIZE, BUT STILL...
OH! ACTUALLY, NOT SO LONG AGO, I WON THIRD PRIZE IN A LOTTERY BEING HELD AT ONE OF MY NEIGHBORHOOD SHOPS.

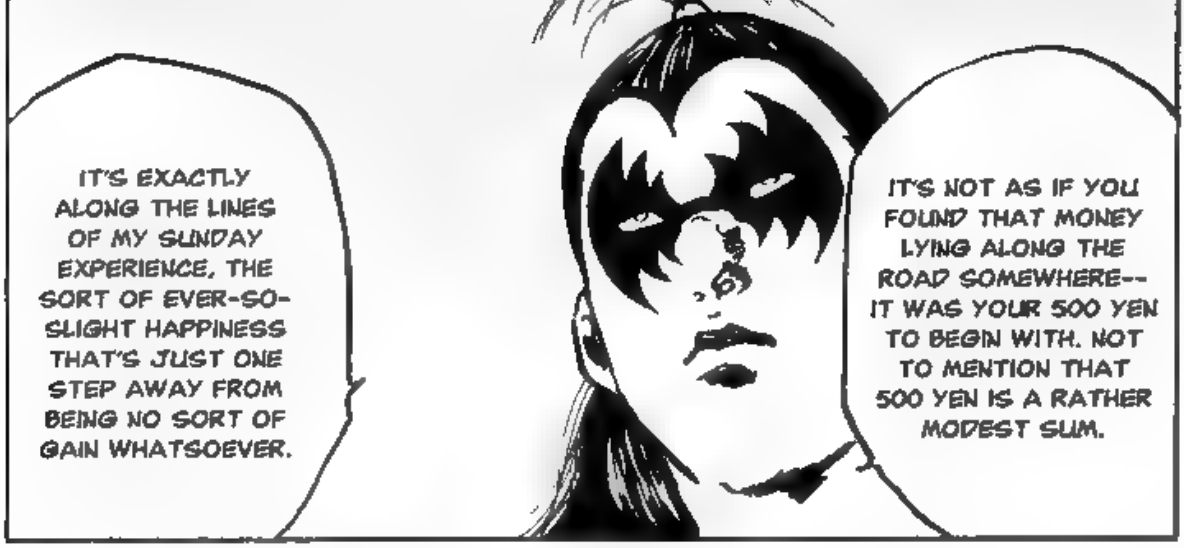

HUH? M-ME?!
START-ING WITH YOU.

HUH?! WHAT'S WRONG ABOUT IT?
NO! YOU'VE GOT IT ALL WRONG!

YEAH, IT MADE ME PRETTY HAPPY.

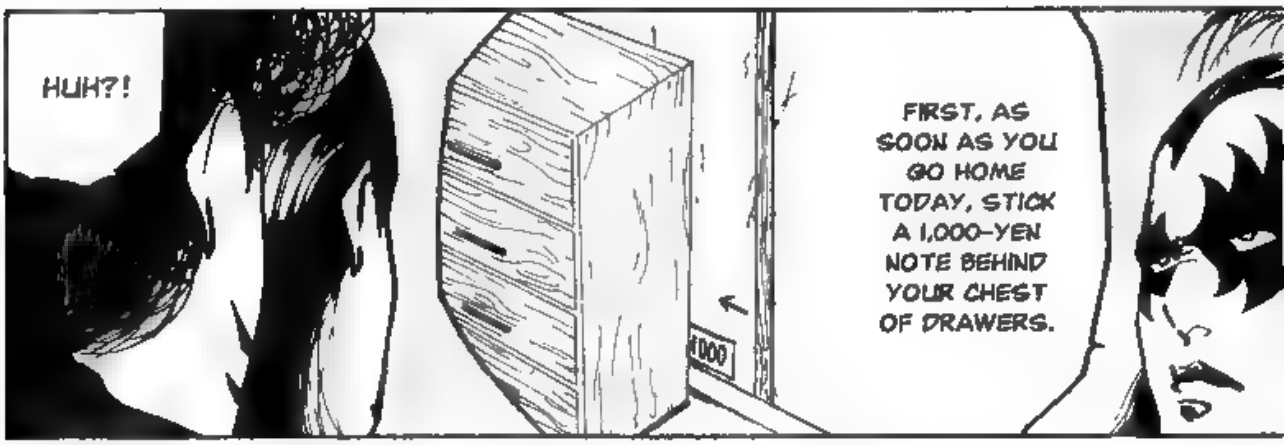
WINNING THIRD PRIZE IN A LOCAL LOTTERY IS A NORMAL, STRAIGHTFORWARD KIND OF HAPPINESS! IT'S NO DIFFERENT FROM SOME STORY ABOUT WINNING A MILLION YEN IN THE NATIONAL LOTTERY!
DIDN'T YOU HEAR A WORD OF MY "HAPPY SUNDAY" STORY JUST NOW?! LOOK, I'M TALKING ABOUT AN INCREDIBLY SIMPLE KIND OF HAPPINESS--THE KIND SO SIMPLE THAT FOR A MINUTE OR TWO, YOU'LL BE WONDERING WHETHER WHAT HAPPENED WAS A GOOD THING OR YOU ACTUALLY JUST GOT SHAFTED!

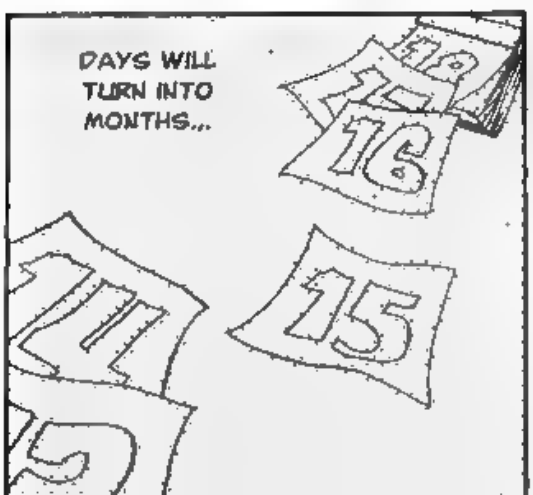
THEN GO AHEAD
MMM. I THINK I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE AFTER
. . . . . .
I WANT TO HEAR STORIES THAT KEEP EVERYTHING I JUST SAID IN MIND.
OH!
AS I WAS CLEANING IT SUDDENLY I FOUND A 500 YEN
IT WAS KIND OF DIRTY AND HAD YOU KNOW BREAD CRUMBS AND STUFF
THE OTHER DAY I WAS CLEANING
BUT STILL WHEN I FOUND IT I SORT OF WENT LUCKY UNDER MY BREATH
OF COURSE THAT 500 YEN WAS MINE TO BEGIN WITH AND IT'S NOT LIKE I EVER LOST IT
I GOT IT RIGHT?!
EX-ACTLY
HOW WAS THAT, BOSS? IS THAT THE KIND OF THING YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT?


IT'S EXACTLY ALONG THE LINES OF MY SUNDAY EXPERIENCE, THE SORT OF EVER-SO-SLIGHT HAPPINESS THAT'S JUST ONE STEP AWAY FROM BEING NO SORT OF GAIN WHATSOEVER.
IT'S NOT AS IF YOU FOUND THAT MONEY LYING ALONG THE ROAD SOMEWHERE-- IT WAS YOUR 500 YEN TO BEGIN WITH. NOT TO MENTION THAT 500 YEN IS A RATHER MODEST SUM.

I WILL TELL YOU WHAT TO DO. LISTEN CLOSELY!

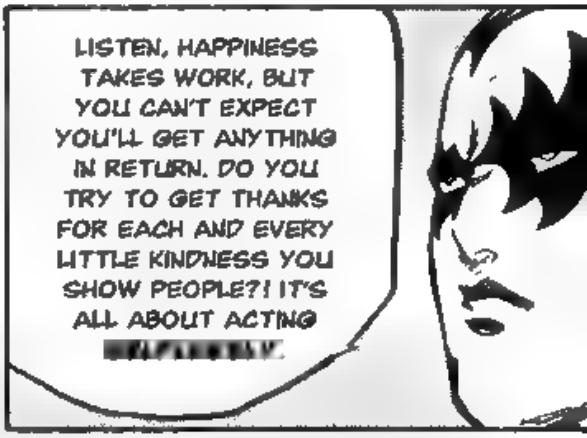
To find happiness.
YEAH, I GET IT NOW. SO WHAT SHOULD I DO?
IT'S JUST THE SIMPLE SORT OF HAPPINESS I WAS TALKING ABOUT.

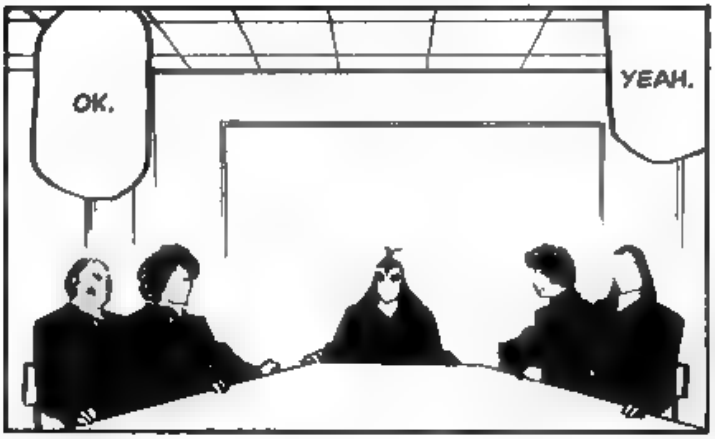

HUH?!
FIRST, AS SOON AS YOU GO HOME TODAY, STICK A 1,000-YEN NOTE BEHIND YOUR CHEST OF DRAWERS.

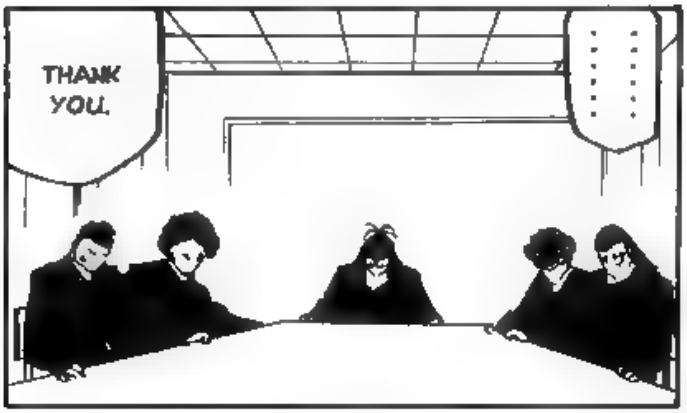

DAYS WILL TURN INTO MONTHS...
16
15

FORGET IT WITH EVERY FIBER IN YOUR BEING!
THEN, FORGET ALL ABOUT THAT 1,000 YEN.

THAT IS THE WAY TO ACHIEVE A SMALL MEASURE OF HAPPINESS.
HEY! 1,000 YEN!
1000 YEN
NIPPON GINKO
1000
THEN, ONE DAY WHEN YOU'RE REARRANGING YOUR ROOM AND HAVE FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT WHAT'S BEHIND YOUR CHEST OF DRAWERS...
HM?
AGAIN, IT IS CRUCIAL THAT YOU COMPLETELY FORGET ABOUT THE MONEY BEHIND YOUR CHEST OF DRAWERS.
OF COURSE IT IS! HAPPINESS DOESN'T JUST FALL INTO YOUR LAP! IT TAKES EFFORT, AND YOU HAVE TO SNATCH IT WITH YOUR OWN TWO HANDS!
SOUNDS LIKE A LOT OF WORK TO ME.
YEAH, I GET IT. IF YOU REMEMBER YOU PUT IT THERE, IT'LL TAKE AWAY FROM THE HAPPINESS OF WHEN YOU FIND IT AGAIN.
IF YOU REMEMBER THAT YOU PUT THAT 1,000 YEN BEHIND THERE, THE WHOLE THING IS MEANINGLESS!
THAT 1,000 YEN WOULD JUST STAY BEHIND THE CHEST OF DRAWERS FOREVER. WHAT IF THAT MONEY NEVER SEES THE LIGHT OF DAY AGAIN?
STILL, WHAT IF YOU FORGET ALL ABOUT IT AND YOU DON'T REARRANGE YOUR ROOM? OR YOU NEVER MOVE?

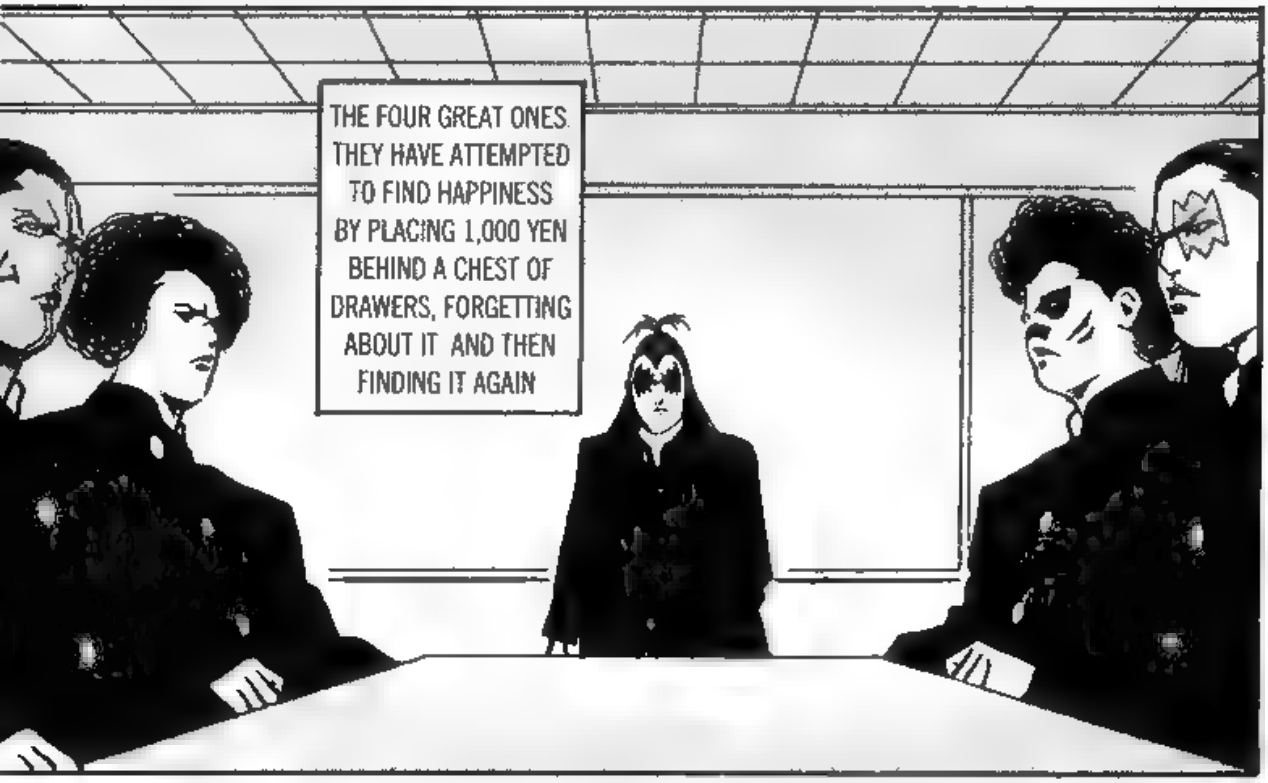

LISTEN, HAPPINESS TAKES WORK, BUT YOU CAN'T EXPECT YOU'LL GET ANYTHING IN RETURN. DO YOU TRY TO GET THANKS FOR EACH AND EVERY LITTLE KINDNESS YOU SHOW PEOPLE?! IT'S ALL ABOUT ACTING [illegible].

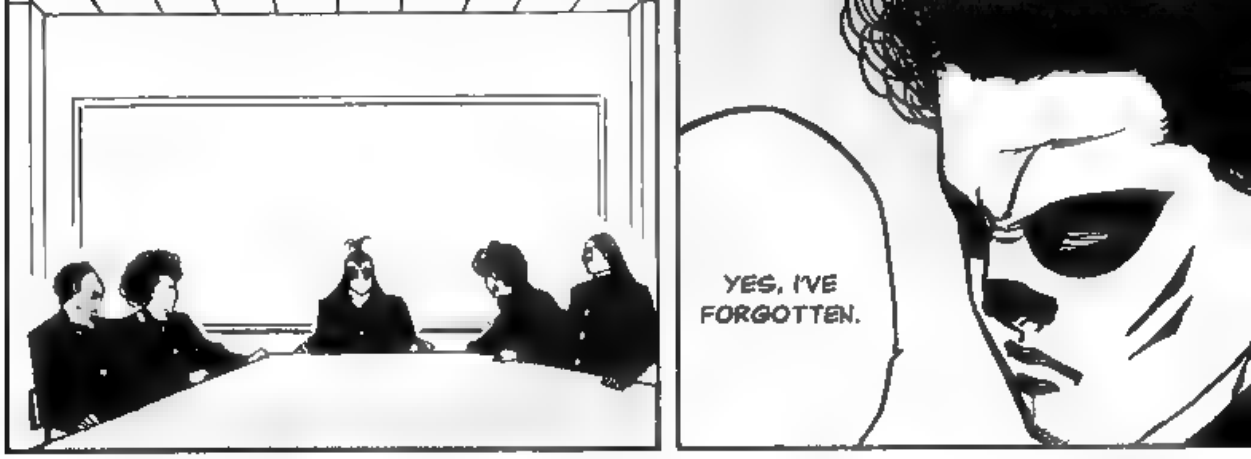




A RATHER HAPPY BUNCH, WOULDN'T YOU SAY?

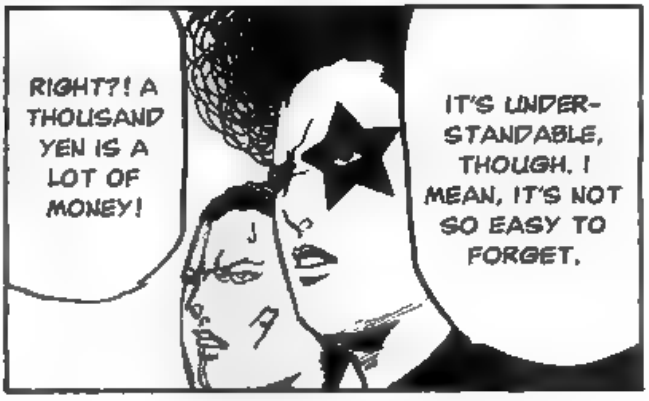
CHAPTER 162: **YOU'VE GOT TO HIDE**


THE FOUR GREAT ONES. THEY HAVE ATTEMPTED TO FIND HAPPINESS BY PLACING 1,000 YEN BEHIND A CHEST OF DRAWERS, FORGETTING ABOUT IT AND THEN FINDING IT AGAIN


YES, I'VE FORGOTTEN.

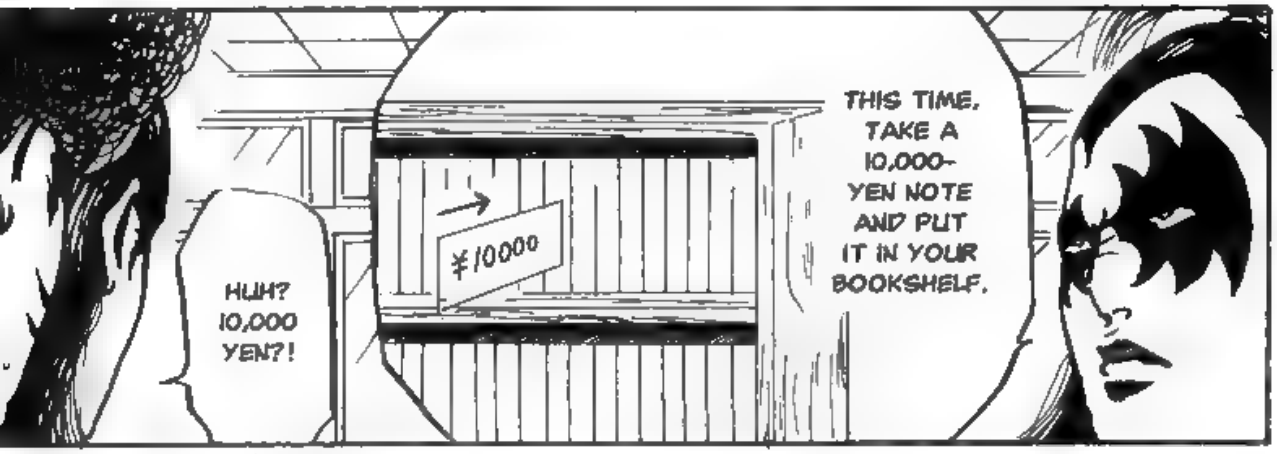
IF YOU'D REALLY FORGOTTEN, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE SAID SOMETHING LIKE THAT!
OH. YOU'VE GOT A POINT.
WAIT. BUT YOU REMEMBER THAT YOU'VE FORGOTTEN!

WAIT A MINUTE.

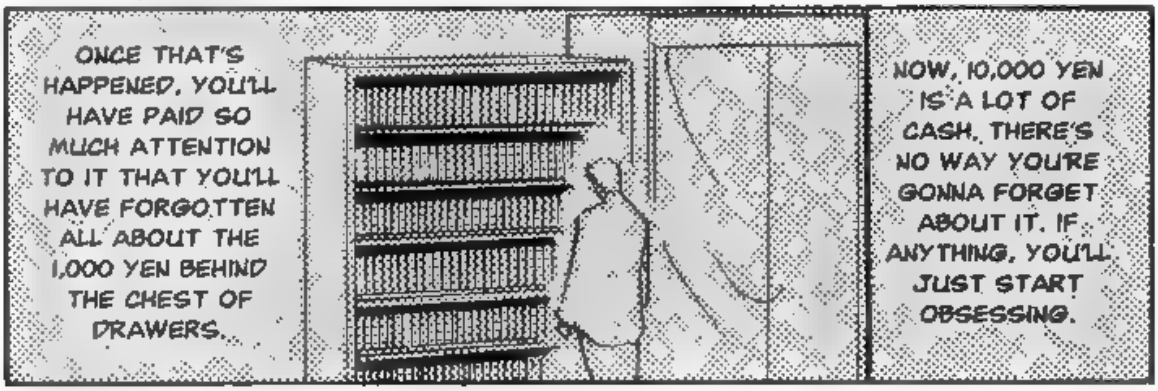

RIGHT?! A THOUSAND YEN IS A LOT OF MONEY!
IT'S UNDER-STANDABLE, THOUGH. I MEAN, IT'S NOT SO EASY TO FORGET.

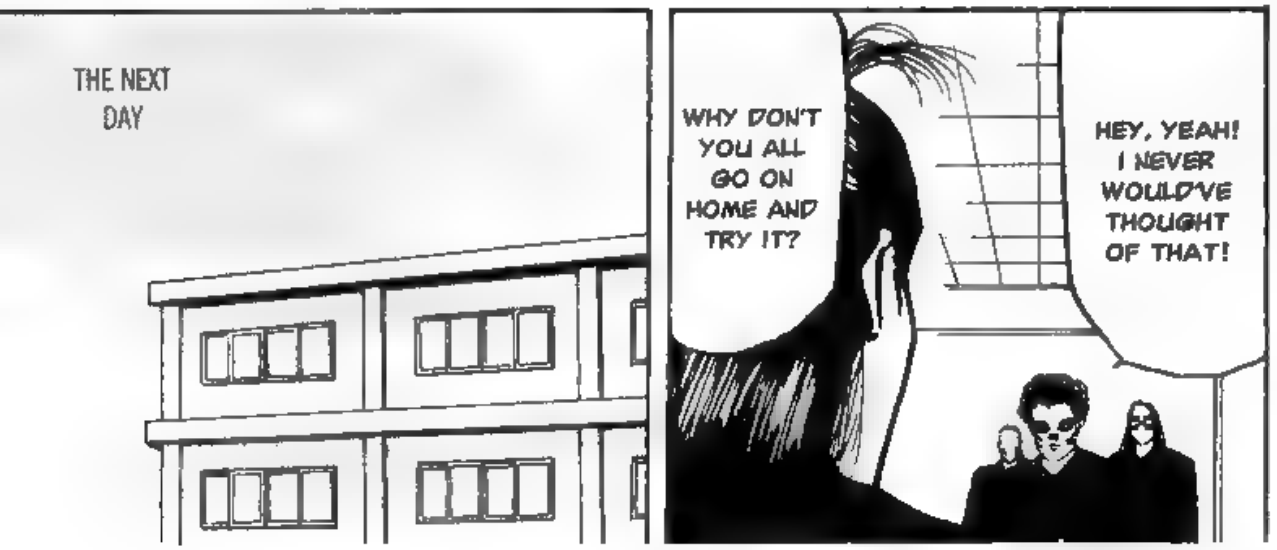
YEAH! I'D ALREADY FORGOTTEN ABOUT IT, BUT NOW I'VE REMEMBERED! IF YOU KEEP TALKIN' ABOUT IT, THERE'S NO WAY WE'LL BE ABLE TO FORGET!
BOSS, WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?! IF YOU KEEP GOING ON ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT WE'VE FORGOTTEN, IT'S JUST GOING TO MAKE US REMEMBER!

SUPER-SPECIAL METHOD?
FINE, I'LL JUST TEACH YOU MY SUPER-SPECIAL METHOD FOR FORGETTING SOMETHING. LISTEN UP!
HMPH! YOU SONS OF [redacted] SURE ARE MAKING A FUSS OVER THIS!


HUH? 10,000 YEN?!
¥10000
THIS TIME, TAKE A 10,000-YEN NOTE AND PUT IT IN YOUR BOOKSHELF.

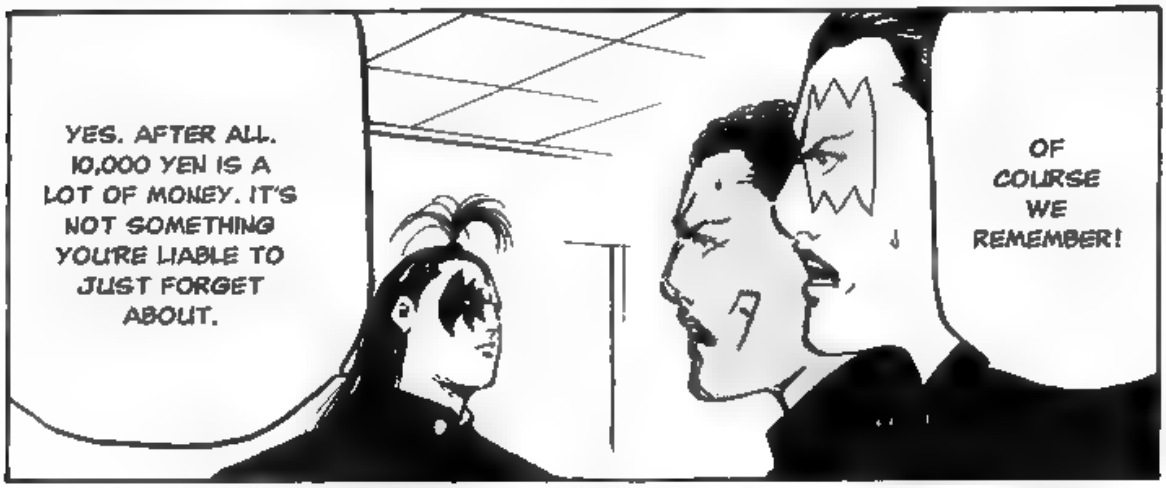
*ABOUT $100 U S

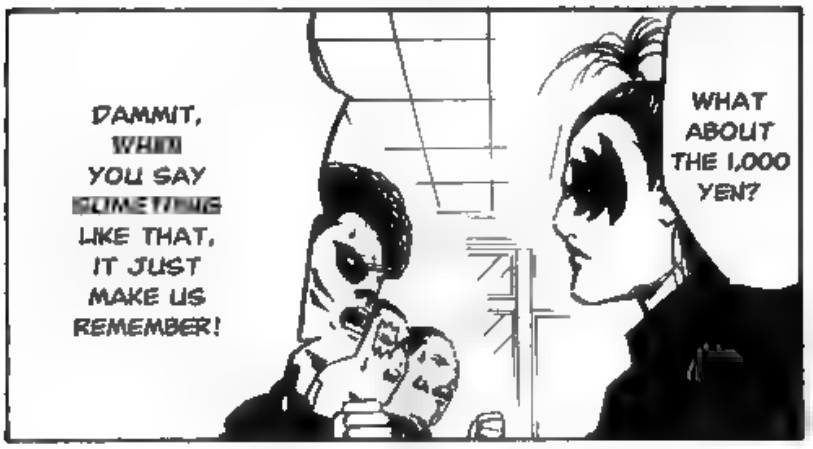

ONCE THAT'S HAPPENED, YOU'LL HAVE PAID SO MUCH ATTENTION TO IT THAT YOU'LL HAVE FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT THE 1,000 YEN BEHIND THE CHEST OF DRAWERS...
NOW, 10,000 YEN IS A LOT OF CASH. THERE'S NO WAY YOU'RE GONNA FORGET ABOUT IT. IF ANYTHING, YOU'LL JUST START OBSESSING.


THE NEXT DAY
WHY DON'T YOU ALL GO ON HOME AND TRY IT?
HEY, YEAH! I NEVER WOULD'VE THOUGHT OF THAT!

AH. YOU DEFINITELY REMEMBER THAT YOU'VE PLACED IT THERE?
YEAH, OF COURSE.

WELL? DID YOU PUT THAT 10,000 YEN IN YOUR BOOKSHELF?


YES. AFTER ALL. 10,000 YEN IS A LOT OF MONEY. IT'S NOT SOMETHING YOU'RE LIABLE TO JUST FORGET ABOUT.
OF COURSE WE REMEMBER!


DAMMIT, WHEN YOU SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT, IT JUST MAKE US REMEMBER!
WHAT ABOUT THE 1,000 YEN?

SO...

YOU'RE ALL SO QUICK TO START COMPLAINING AND BLAME SOMEONE ELSE, AREN'T YOU?
STOP TALK-ING ABOUT IT, WILL YOU?!
OH, MAN! I'D FORGOTTEN ABOUT IT, BUT NOW I'M GONNA HAVE TO FORGET ALL OVER AGAIN!

IT'S BECAUSE YOU DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY! YOU'RE SO POOR THAT YOU'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO GET THAT 1,000 YEN OUT OF YOUR MIND! BUT THE TRUTH IS, EVEN ELEMENTARY-SCHOOL KIDS HAVE THAT MUCH IN THEIR POCKETS THESE DAYS!
LET ME TELL YOU WHY NONE OF YOU CAN FORGET ABOUT THAT 1,000 YEN BEHIND YOUR CHEST OF DRAWERS:
THERE IS ONLY ONE ANSWER.
WELL, WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO ABOUT IT?
YEAH, THAT'S TRUE.
WHAT?!
GO GET JOBS.
ALRIGHT, FINE.
LOOK, I'M ONLY TELLING YOU THIS FOR YOUR OWN GOOD. JUST TRUST ME AND DO AS I SAY.
BECAUSE YOU DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY! IS THERE SOME FLAW IN MY REASONING?
WHY DO WE HAVE TO GET JOBS?

ONE MONTH LATER

IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO MEET LIKE THIS. WHY DON'T WE TALK ABOUT HOW THINGS HAVE BEEN GOING FOR YOU RECENTLY?
WELL, I KNOW THAT YOUR JOBS HAVE BEEN KEEPING YOU ALL BUSY.

YEAH. AND I'M HAPPY TO HAVE MADE SOME NEW FRIENDS AT THE WORKPLACE.
WORKING HARD, BUILDING UP A SWEAT... IT'S MORE REWARDING THAN I'D IMAGINED.

IS THAT SO?
IT'S BEEN A BUSY MONTH, BUT I FEEL A REAL SENSE OF ACCOMPLISH-MENT.

GOOD. I'M HAPPY FOR YOU.
IT LOOKS LIKE WE ALL FEEL WE'VE ACHIEVED SOMETHING.

THE BOSS SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN A REAL SHINE TO ME. HE'S ASKED ME TO START WORKING THERE FULL TIME.

I'M REALLY GRATEFUL TO HAVE ACCOMPLISHED SO MUCH...BUT WHAT DID WE ALL DO THIS FOR AGAIN?
UH, I DON'T REMEMBER ALL THAT WELL MYSELF. BUT THAT SOUNDS ABOUT RIGHT.
RIGHT, BOSS? THAT'S WHAT THIS WAS ABOUT, WASN'T IT?
YEAH! THAT'S WHAT IT WAS!
WE WERE TALKING ABOUT HOW TO BE HAPPY OR SOMETHING, RIGHT?
YOU'RE ALL HAPPY JUST DOING WHAT YOU'RE DOING.
I'LL BE BLUNT, THOUGH--IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER RIGHT NOW, DOES IT?
IT'S LIKE, YOU CAN'T KEEP HOLDING ON TO THE PAST, 'CUZ THAT'S NO WAY TO BE HAPPY. YOU HAVE TO FORGET ALL THAT. YEAH, I FEEL LIKE THAT'S THE LESSON TO BE LEARNED HERE.
RIGHT?
YUP. I'M HAPPY NOW, SO THAT'S ENOUGH.
YOU SAID IT.

NOT AT ALL. WELL, I SUPPOSE WE CAN CONSIDER THIS MATTER RESOLVED.
YOU HAD THAT IN MIND THE WHOLE TIME, HUH? THANKS, BOSS!

IT APPEARS YOU'VE ALL FINALLY UNDERSTOOD. IT TOOK A WHILE FOR YOU TO GET THERE, BUT THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I WANTED YOU ALL TO LEARN.

MOVING ON TO A DIFFERENT TOPIC...
OH.

QUIT BRINGING IT UP ALREADY!
WHATEVER BECAME OF THE 1,000 YEN YOU PUT BEHIND YOUR CHEST OF DRAWERS?

THE DIARY OF NOBORU YAMAGUCHI

Dear Diary,

I went to a ramen shop today where I was shocked to see my rival, Honey Boy. It had been a while since we'd last met, and he didn't appear to recognize me. I went ahead and sat at the table next to where he and his friends were engaged in conversation...and he stuck it to me again.

He and one of the others were chastising their friend for throwing the gorilla away for no reason. Their friend, however, responded with an impassioned speech about naruto. It was a fool's response of the highest caliber, the kind of skill that no amateur could hope to possess. I would have expected no less from one of Honey Boy's associates. They are truly forces to be reckoned with.

Their conversation also gave me plenty of material for my joke submissions, so I suppose I can cut them some slack.

CROMARTIE HIGH SCHOOL VOLUME SEVEN

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CROMARTIE HIGH SCHOOL VOL. 7

P. 7 Hokuto's face

The gallant Hokuto was kind enough to offer his stately features to provide the following original publishing information:

- *Shonen Magazine Comics*
- *Forging Valiantly Ahead! Cromartie High School*
- *Eiji Nonaka / Volume 7*
- *Kodansha*
- *"The Hot Tears of Fervent Desire story"*

P. 8 Muta

Keiji Mutoh, aka the Great Muta, is a famous Japanese wrestler who has sported a variety of different "looks" throughout his career; one of his earlier makeup schemes was used as the model for Masahiro's own (though this is the first time Muta has actually been referenced).

P. 9 Ryutaro Kamioka

Sometimes called the "Johnny Carson of Japan," Kamioka is a now-retired television celebrity known for his interview and variety programs.

P. 16 *Fukujinzuke*

Named after the Seven Gods of Fortune, *fukujinzuke* is a pickled side dish traditionally made from seven different vegetables. Modern *fukujinzuke* can be made from fewer ingredients, which tend to include lotus root, eggplant, daikon radish and ginger.

P. 24-25 Last name, first name

Japanese name order lists surname first, and even longtime friend can continue to refer to one another by their last name. Usage of someone's first name shows a great degree of familiarity.

P. 36 Chambara Trio

The Chambara Trio is a Japanese comic troupe that appears on stage in historical garb, performing swordfights and period acting in addition to their comedy routines. (*Full Metal Panic* fans take note: The Chambara Trio are supposedly the first to have begin the comedic tradition of slapping one another with *harisen* paper fans, Chidori's weapon of choice.) Originally comprised of three members, the trio later elected to bring in a fourth member.

P. 51 Ace pilots and Newtypes

In *Mobile Suit Gundam*, several of the gifted (or "ace") fighter pilots around whom the action revolves are Newtypes, people with telepathic or psychokinetic abilities.

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P. 55 **Curtain time**

Traditional establishments such as sushi and ramen restaurants and even hot springs place a low-slung curtain called a *noren* when they are open for business.

P. 81 ***Nimono***

Translated literally as the rather unappetizing-sounding "simmered things," *nimono* covers a wide range of meats and vegetables that have been slow-cooked in broth.

P. 101 ***Naruto***

Naruto is a kind of steamed fish paste used as garnish for soups and ramen. By itself it has little flavor, but it is used to add to the texture and presentation of dishes.

P. 126 **Hajime**

"Hajime" is a legitimate male name. It is written with the kanji for "one," which is a simple straight line.

P. 127 **Heisei recession**

The Heisei recession is the name given to the economic slowdown that began in March of 1991 and lasted until October of 1993 (though the Japanese economy showed little or near growth for almost four years).